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MEN AND WOMEN

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

BY

ARSENE HOUSSAYE.

Volume Second.

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The eighteenth century has two well-defined physiognomies. The first sprightly, frivolous, charming even in its follies, is marvellously personified in some well-known figures: Phillipe d'Orleans and La Phalaris, the Duc de Richelieu and the Abbess de Chelles, Antoine Watteau, Voltaire in his youth, Mademoiselle de Camargo, the king Louis XV., supported by Madame de Pompadour and Madame Dubarry, Boucher and Vanloo, La Tour and Greuze, Voisenon who was an abbé, and Bernis who was a cardinal. Who besides? Shall I dare, after all these profane names, to mention her who consoled herself for the king and the throne, in her sheepfold of the Trianon? Do not forget some celebrated actresses: Mademoiselle Guimard, who lived like a queen; Sophie Arnould, who lived like a philosopher; others of rather less celebrity in the background of the picture. Now efface all these charming heads: the eighteenth century will appear to you under its serious aspect; there is Bayle who announces the dawn of a day which never broke; there are the bloody exhibitions of the convulsionaires, who dared to enact the tragedy of Calvary; there is Crébillon at the theatre; Jean-Jacques in literature; there

are the economists, the reformers, the philosophers, who are agitated like the shades of the forest in the time of the storm ; there is the *Encyclopédie*, that first rumbling of the revolution ; there is Danton and Robespierre ; there is André Chenier and Louis David ; there is Bonaparte, who towers above all the great personages as the curtain falls.

This comedy of human life, which lasted a hundred years, and is entitled the *Eighteenth Century*, has many frivolous, tragic, romantic, and heroic scenes worthy of an intelligent curiosity. We imagine that the last age is known in every point of view, thanks to Memoirs of modern manufacture. It can be said that, thanks to these lies in octavo, the age of Louis XV. is almost entirely falsified. In this too much calumniated time, many noble passions opened beneath the sun. You will say that then they knew not how to love, that love was naught but a game, a smile, a diversion ; believe me, the science of the heart has been the same in all time. Do not judge so lightly of the passions of an epoch ; hair-powder, patches, hoop-petticoats, and trains, did not prevent our grandmothers' hearts from beating. Does not that beautiful love poem, called *Manon Lescaut*, date from 1750 ?

MEN AND WOMEN

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CRÉBILLON THE TRAGIC.

It may excite astonishment that we return to individuals who, at the first glance, appear to be known to everybody, but in no instance have we thought of reanimating one of these figures without the aid of unpublished documents. Up to the present time, moreover, much greater attention has been given to a variation in the text of an author, than to a trait of character in his life. What, however, can be more interesting, than the study of the passions of a man whose name has survived him! Our chief study, therefore, in a poet should be, less the work which bears his name, than the movements of his heart. Poetry in action attracts us more than poetry on paper.

Note.—We may be permitted to state, that if we take a pleasure in retouching the portraits of these celebrated painters and authors, it is because we think we have discovered that, thanks to academic discourses, romantic statements, and colorings of all kinds, all these men who so decidedly mark the past century, have been somewhat disfigured.

About 1670, there lived at Dijon a certain vain notary, proud in anticipation of a title which he coveted. This original was named Melchior Jolyot; his father was an innkeeper; but as soon as he had laid by a little money, he managed to obtain the office of "*Master clerk-in-chief of the chamber of accounts of Dijon, with the title of registrar of the same.*" The following year he purchased the small, obscure, and abandoned manor of Crébillon, distant a league and a half from the city.

His son, Prosper Jolyot, was then twenty-two; he was studying law, and on the point of being admitted as an advocate. From the earliest years of his sojourn in Paris, we find that he styled himself Prosper Jolyot *de Crébillon.* The ennobling of the family thus proceeded at a good pace. Sixty years after, a worthy erudite of Dijon, J. B. Michault, wrote to the president, De Ruffey: "Last Saturday [June 19, 1792], our celebrated Crébillon was buried at St. Gervais. In the invitations to his funeral they gave him the title of *écuyer* [squire], but what appears more astonishing to me is, that the son has taken that of *Messire.*" Crébillon the tragic ended by deceiving even himself about his imaginary nobility. He wrote, in 1761, to the president de Brosse: "I have always had so little *amour propre* about my descent, that I have neglected very flattering evidences upon that point. M. de Ricard, master of the accounts at Dijon, gave my father one day two titles which he had found. Of these two titles, written in very bad Latin, one was of a Jolyot, chamberlain of Raoul, duke of Burgundy, and the other a Jolyot, chamberlain of Philip the Good.

These two titles are lost. I also remember to have heard in my childhood, from old inhabitants of Nuits, my father's native district, that there were formerly Jolyots, powerful lords in those cantons." Vanity of vanities! Is it possible that under the reign of the *Encyclopédié*, Crébillon, a nobleman by his genius, should have deluded himself with these chimeras and lies, for the truth is, that the Jolyots were, from the fifteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, honest innkeepers, who sold their wine without adulteration, as they pressed it from the purple or golden grapes of their Burgundian hill-sides. Notwithstanding, Crébillon, finding that nobody contested his nobility, pushed his infatuation so far, as to announce one day that his family arms were an eagle of gold on azure field, holding in his beak a lily proper, with stem and leaves of silver. Everything went according to his fancy; his son, by an unexpected marriage, allied himself to one of the highest families of England. The old tragic author could thus pass into the other world, believing that he should leave in this a name celebrated in the arts, and inscribed upon the great heraldic roll of France; but, behold! a century after the creation of this fancy-nobility, founded upon nothing substantial, like most of the titles of the eighteenth century, a *savant* who had nothing better to do, betook himself to investigating the matter, and devoted many years of precious time to this odd labor. By dint of shaking the dust out of the archives of Dijon and Nuits, and rummaging the registers of the notaries of the neighborhood, he succeeded in recovering the genealogical tree of Jolyot.

Some of the most glorious members of the family were notaries; some others, not the least philosophic, were innkeepers. Shade of Crébillon! pardon this savant who has thus thrown down the brilliant scaffolding of your vanity.*

Prosper Joylot de Crébillon was born at Dijon, February 13, 1674. He studied with the Jesuits, like Corneille, Bossuet, and Voltaire. The Jesuits have, it is known, in each of their colleges, a secret register, wherein they inscribe under the name of each of their pupils, notes, in Latin, on their talents and character. The Abbé d'Olivet, at a later date, transcribed the note accorded to Crébillon, *Puer ingeniosus sed insignis nebulo*, that is to say, a youth full of talent, but a great scapegrace. The Jesuits had pedagogues among them, who somewhat abused the right of judging their scholars. Crébillon was simply a playful child, very free in his words and actions.

His father, notary, and afterward chief registrar of the chamber of accounts in Dijon, desiring that his family should distinguish itself in the magistracy, destined his son to the long-robe, saying that the best inheritance he had to leave him was his example. Crébillon yielded with a tolerably good grace, resolving to have a gay time of it at Paris, while studying law. He accordingly came to Paris, where he divided his time between study, mistresses, and theatres. As soon as he was admitted, he entered the office of an attorney,† a friend of his father,

* Revelations concerning the two Crebillons, by M. Amaton, accompanied by documentary evidence.

† He was named Prieur, son of the Prieur celebrated by Scarron

who received him in a fraternal manner. One might believe that this man, by the impress of audacity on his face, and of genius on his brow, betrayed his sex, like Achilles when arms were shown to him. Not only was it necessary to inform him that he was a poet, but also to push him into the arena in spite of himself.

The poets have slandered the lawyers a great deal, and they have had cause. Nevertheless, we must do justice to one of them—the only one, perhaps, of all of them who has ever shown a taste for poetry. The worthy man in whose charge Crébillon had been placed, remarked, with intelligent curiosity, the romantic individuality which his pupil preserved amid stamped paper. Crébillon worked little, disputed often, and walked a great deal. He passed his mornings in reading romances, and his evenings in composing them, at least in action, and these are without contradiction the best. He bid fair to become the most turbulent youth of his time; proving himself, in this respect, a true compatriot of Piron and Rameau. He had in him that indescribable frank gayety, that joyous expansiveness, that amiable carelessness, which savored so truly of his native soil. He had early inhaled the intoxicating perfume of the Burgundian vine branches. Therefore he made his début by some drinking songs, not of a water-drinking character, like many an insipid song of the time. The attorney, astonished at his brilliancy, advised him, will it be believed, to devote himself to poetry. Crébillon was twenty-seven years old; he refused, saying, that he did not believe himself possessed of a creative genius; that every true poet was

a god, holding chaos in one hand and light in the other; that, as for himself, he had but a poor pen, destined to defend bad causes in bad style. But the attorney had divined that a spark of creative fire already inflamed the soul of Crébillon. "Do not hesitate to become a poet," he said, "it is written upon your brow, your looks have told me so a thousand times; there is but one man in France capable of succeeding Racine, and that man is yourself." Crébillon derided the idea, but for all that, when at work alone by himself on a transcript of a petition to parliament, he recalled to himself the magic of the theatre, the great pictures, the fine speeches, the sublime words, a movement of inspiration seized him, and when the attorney returned, he held out his hand and said, "You have shown me the road, and I will take it."—"Not so fast," said the attorney to him; "a masterpiece is not improvised in three weeks; remain here quietly as if you were still the attorney's clerk; eat my bread, drink my wine, when the work is done you may take your flight."

Crébillon remained therefore at his place; at the same table on which he had written petitions, he wrote the five acts of a barbarous tragedy, *Le Mort de Brutus*, in which, wishing to elevate still higher the character of the Romans, he fairly mounted them all on stilts. The attorney exerted himself to have the piece read at the Comédie-Française. Crébillon, after many an entreaty, was admitted to read his piece; it was unanimously condemned. The poet was of a haughty disposition; he came back to the attorney's house, threw the manuscript at his feet, and cried in despair, "You have dis-

graced me." According to D'Alembert, "Crébillon was so chagrined, that his rage fell even upon the attorney himself, he looked upon him almost as an enemy, who had counselled him to dishonor himself, swore that he would never again believe him, and that he would never make another verse for the rest of his life."

However, there were in the attorney's house too many good reasons for retaining the poet, who would nowhere else have found so comfortable a dwelling nor so loyal a friend. He betook himself again to the study of the law. But the deed was done, the poet had broken through the lawyer. And as the attorney never wearied in predicting his success, Crébillon ventured upon another tragedy. He chose for his subject *Idoménée;* this time the comedians accepted the piece, and played it soon after. It had a doubtful success, but Crébillon thought himself sufficiently encouraged to continue on his course.

At the start Crébillon showed his strength; he was compared to Hercules, exercising his infant powers in combating lions. The fifth act of *Idomenee* had appeared unworthy of the first four; at the third representation the poet presented another fifth act, which was admired, and interested the public in a genius so prolific. They were not then habituated to poetical improvisation.

In *Atrée*, Crébillon, who had made his début as a scholar, rose to the style of a master. The players studied their parts with enthusiasm. The day of its representation the attorney called the author to his bedside, for he was stricken down by mortal disease. "My friend, I have a presentiment that this very

night you will be hailed as a son of Corneille by the wits and critics of the nation. I have but few days more to live, I have no longer strength to walk, but be certain that I shall be in my place this evening, that is in the parterre of the *Comedie*." In fact this worthy man caused himself to be carried to the theatre. The intelligent judges applauded certain passages full of strength and color, some beauties of great splendor, but at the catastrophe when Atreus wishes to make Thyestes drink blood all cried out with horror (Gabrielle de Vergy had not yet eaten the heart of her lover upon the stage). "The attorney," says D'Alembert, "would have left the theatre in affliction, if he had waited for the opinions of the audience to determine his own; the parterre showed more consternation than interest; they saw the curtain fall without hissing or clapping, and separated in that ominous silence which announces in an audience no wish to be present a second time. But the attorney judged better than the public, or rather he judged from the first moment as the public was to judge soon after. The piece ended, he went behind the scenes in search of his friend, who, still very uncertain as to his fate, was already almost resigned to his fall. He embraced Crébillon with transport. "*I die content*," said he to him, "*I have made you a poet, and I leave a man to the nation.*"

In fact, new beauties were discovered at each repetition. The spectators suffered themselves with real enjoyment to be carried away by the terrific interest which the poet inspired. A few days after the name of Crébillon was famous at Paris, and

throughout the provinces. It was thought that the soul of the haughty Corneille had come to animate the muse of the author of *Atrée*. The piece at that time was better fitted for the English than the French stage. In the fifth act, when Atreus presents to Thyestes the blood of his son, the women recoiled to the back of the boxes in horror. But at the end of the representation, however, the poet received the support of an Englishman, who obtained an introduction in order to congratulate him. "Ah, Monsieur! how your cup of blood made me shudder. We have got a play at last. What beauties, what deep utterances, what sublime horrors!" A critic has made the remark that, if, at the sight of the bloody cup of Atreus, the women fainted away, on the other hand the same women at the sight of the urn and the agony of Gabrielle de Vergy stretched their heads out of their boxes for a better view of that horrible sight, like those children who love to hear stories which scare them out of their wits.

The actors, while urging him to hasten to other triumphs, asked him why he had adopted the terrific style. "I had no choice," he answered, "Corneille had taken heaven, Racine the earth, I had nothing left but hell, into which I have thrown myself heart and soul." Voltaire came after Crébillon and took by turns heaven, earth, and hell. But do we not find in Voltaire a little of Corneille, of Racine, and of Crébillon?

The father of Crébillon was very much irritated at his son's abandonment, as they then expressed it, of Themis for Melpomene. In vain had the attorney pleaded the son's cause, in vain Crébillon addressed

this true father of a poet a supplication in verse to obtain his pardon; the chief clerk of the chamber of accounts of Dijon replied that he cursed him, and thought of making a will. To destroy himself utterly in the opinion of this man, who was a blind worshipper of the magistracy, Crébillon wrote to him: "I am about to marry, if it please you, the most beautiful girl in the world; you may believe me on this point, for her beauty is all she has."

The father answered: "Sir, your tragedies are not to my taste; your children shall not be mine; commit as many follies as you please; I console myself with the thought that I refused my approbation. Depend more than ever, sir, upon yourself and your works, you are no longer of my family."

Crébillon was none the less eager to marry *the most beautiful girl in the world.* It was the sweet and charming Charlotte Péaget, whom Dufresny speaks of. She was the daughter of an apothecary. It was by frequenting his front shop that Crébillon found his way into the back shop. There was nothing very romantic in this, but love throws a poetic charm over everything it touches. Thus just before marrying Charlotte, he surprised her one morning giving a sick person flowers of mallows and violets. "My dear Charlotte," said he to her, "we will go together in our Dijonnais mountains, and gather mallows and violets for your father." In the most odious prison there may be always smiling outlets of escape. Crébillon saw not the faded violets which fell from Charlotte's hand, he was already gathering on the green hill-sides violets all redolent of the dews of spring.

Here is an extract copied from the registers of the parish of La Villette, of the entry of Crébillon's marriage. He chose without doubt a parish where he was unknown, wishing, for important reasons, as will appear, to conceal the date of his marriage. That which proves it still further is that in the registry of his marriage he took the name of Jolyot only, although celebrated under that of Crébillon: "The year of grace, 1707, the last of January, the sieur Prosper Jolyot, of the parish of St. Sulpice, and Demoiselle Charlotte Péaget, of the parish of St. Etienne du Mont, after their mutual consent by us taken, we have given to them our benediction, and they have been by us married, in presence of witnesses." By this it will be seen that Crébillon lived on the same side of the river as the Comédie-Française. As soon as he was married he went to live a short distance from the apothecary, and was was not long without having occasion for his services, as another extract from the registry of births of the parish of St. Etienne du Mont witnesses. "The year 1707, February 15, was baptized by me, the undersigned priest, Claude Prosper [the future author of the *Sofa*], son of Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, and of Demoiselle Charlotte Péaget, his spouse, born the day previous, at half-past six in the morning, Place Maubert, and held at the font by Claude François Péaget, master apothecary, and by Demoiselle Jeanne Jolyot, spinster." *

It will be understood without difficulty that Crébil-

* The Demoiselle Jeanne Jolyot, spinster, godmother of the infant, was Crébillon's eldest sister; doubtless she was not in fear of paternal displeasure by coming to attend the marriage of her brother.

lon had no time to ask his father's consent again. His too beautiful and too charming Charlotte Péaget* was a wife only fourteen days before becoming a mother.

It is from the earliest days of his marriage, and from this retreat in the Place Maubert, that his singular fancy for dogs and cats dates, but, above all, his singular passion for tobacco. He was without contradiction the most famous smoker of his day. You may see in the *Ana* that he could not rhyme his tragedies except in a darkened room, full of smoke, with a population of dogs and cats jumping and gambolling about. He was known to close his shutters and light candles at mid-day. A thousand other extravagances are cited, but we must mistrust a little these *Ana* makers who imagine that they are painting a man when they are only making a caricature.

When M. Melchior Jolyot learned that his son had really married an apothecary's daughter he well-nigh died of chagrin. The worthy man believed as firmly in his recent nobility as in his religion; this mésalliance made him desperate, and this time he disinherited the poet by a will, in due form. Happily for Crébillon, his father, before his death, came to Paris, curious in his own despite to judge for himself the theatrical silliness of that addle-pate his son, who married an apothecary's daughter, and instead of reaching nobility by becoming an attorney, wrote fustian for the buffoons of the stage. It might have been urged in his defence before the parental tribu-

* *Le Mercure*, of July 17, 1762, in noticing the death of Crébillon, speaks of her as a young person, very beautiful and *very virtuous*.

nal, that the apothecary's daughter was one of the most beautiful and charming of women, and it might have been added that the nobility of which the father dreamed, the nobility of the gown, which was not acquired by a Dijonnais family except after three generations, was not to be compared to that nobility of genius which his son had acquired with so much éclat.

The father of Crébillon arrived in Paris to witness a representation of one of the follies of the wretched prodigal who, in better times, had been his son. *Atrée* had just been reproduced; the father was seized with terror, grief, and admiration. The same evening he ran to Crébillon. He got into a hackney-coach, and was conducted to a house in the faubourg St. Marceau, to which he had been directed. He was received by some seven or eight dogs, who jumped upon his legs as soon as the door opened. Charlotte had only to say a word to call them to order, but the dogs finding without doubt a family likeness in the appearance of the stranger recommenced their gambols and barks about M. Melchior Jolyot, who did not know what to make of this noisy family. Charlotte, who was alone waiting her husband's return to supper, was greatly surprised at this unexpected visit. At first she thought he was some great personage come to offer the poet his protection, but after stealthily regarding the stranger a few moments, she exclaimed, "You are my husband's father, or at any rate one of the Jolyots." The old clerk was unwilling to wait for the return of his son to abandon himself to all the emotions of his reanimated heart. He embraced his daughter-in-law

with warmth, weeping with joy, and reproaching himself for his harshness. "Yes, yes," he cried, "you are ever henceforth my children, all I have is yours." After a moment's pause, "How is it," he exclaimed, "that with all his successes my son should have condemned his wife to such an abode and such a supper."—"Condemned! do you say," murmured Charlotte—"do not deceive yourself, we are happy here." She took her father-in-law's hand and led him into the next room to a cradle shaded by white curtains. "Look!" she exclaimed, drawing aside the curtain with the solicitude of a mother.

The old Burgundian was still more softened by the sight of his grandson, the same who twenty years after wrote the *Sofa*. "Are we not happy?" said she. "What do we need more; we live on little; when we have nothing, my father provides for us." They returned to the other room. "What wine is this?" said the old Burgundian, uncorking the bottle destined to moisten the very frugal supper. "What! has my son descended to this! The Crébillons have always drunk good wine."

At this moment the whole population of dogs set to yelping and barking most joyously. Crébillon was coming up stairs. He soon entered, escorted by two dogs who had followed him from the theatre.

"Two more," said the father; "really it is too many. Monsieur, my son, I have come to beg your pardon; in desiring too much to show myself your father, I have forgotten that my first duty was to love you." Crébillon threw himself into his father's arms. "But, corbleu, monsieur, I can not forgive you for having so many dogs."—"You are right, but what

would become of the poor brutes! It is not good to be alone, saith the Scriptures. No longer being able to live with my equals, I have surrounded myself with dogs. The dog is the solitary man's friend." —"But I imagine you are not alone here," said the father, looking at Charlotte Péaget, and pointing with his finger to the cradle of the infant. "Who knows!" said the young wife, with a touching and melancholy expression; "he speaks so, perhaps, from a presentiment. I fear I shall not live long. He has but one friend upon earth, myself; now, when I am dead—"—"But you shall not die," said Crébillon; "can I live without you?—Father, was I not right in my folly?" He embraced Charlotte, and recited these beautiful verses of the chorus of *Agamemnon*:—

"Faithful as the dog, the pride of the shepherd,
Tender as the infant who returns his mother's caresses,
Fair as the bright morn which follows a day of storm,
Blessing, as doth the clear brook which the traveller meeteth, unhoped for."

Madame Crébillon was not deceived in her presentiments. The poet, who, as is known, died at a patriarchal age, lived in his widowhood in the most profound solitude for fifty-one years.

Crébillon and his wife accompanied the old clerk from Paris to Dijon, where he presented his son to the inhabitants to their great surprise, as M. Jolyot de Crébillon, the successor of MM. Corneille and Racine to the honors of the theatre. Crébillon had all the trouble in the world to restrain his father's enthusiasm—but he succeeded in doing so, not by his remonstrances, but by his insatiable zeal in draw-

upon his father's purse. After staying three months in Dijon, Crébillon returned to Paris. It was time to do so; a month more and the father would have taken offence again and made another will to disinherit not the rebellious child, but the prodigal son. Crébillon, in truth, could never keep any money, resembling all beings who toss about imaginary mountains of gold.

Scarcely had he reached Paris, when he was forced to return to Dijon. The old clerk had died suddenly. The inheritance was very difficult to settle. "I have only come here," Crébillon wrote to the eldest of the brothers Pâris, "to accumulate law-suits." He heedlessly suffered himself to be drawn into these suits, in which by little and little the bequest of Melchior Jolyot became the property of the lawyers. "I was a great simpleton," said Crébillon afterward; "I recited the finest passages of my tragedies to these men of law, who exhausted themselves in admiration. Their admiration blinded me. I did not see that these cunning foxes were eating up my estate — the poets will always be like La Fontaine's crows."

The only part of the estate saved was the little manor of Crébillon, the rental of which the poet settled upon his two sisters. Notwithstanding this, on his return to Paris he entirely changed his mode of life, transferred his Penates to the neighborhood of the Luxembourg, and lived in magnificent style, as if he had actually inherited a large fortune. It is difficult to explain this act of folly; the report was that he had inherited an estate. Without doubt he wished to preserve the family honor, or rather vanity,

in seeking to deceive the public as to the value of the estate.

True wisdom does not inhabit the world in which we live. Crébillon collected all the superfluities of luxury about him. In vain did his wife (as did the wife of Dufresny at the same time) strive with both hands to restrain him on the brink of ruin; in vain she reminded him of the frugal repasts and plain furniture of their small house in the Place Maubert, "*so gay on sunny days.*"—"True," said he, "and if we are forced to return to it I shall not complain; what matter if the wine is not so good, if you still pour it out for me."

Happily, Crébillon in the same year secured victory after victory; the representations of *Electre* were given, which gained the suffrages of all, and astonished even the critics. Crébillon had softened down his brutalities, and preserving all his grandeur, had shown himself more natural and more true. *Electre* was followed by *Rhadamiste*, which passed then for a powerful and boldly-drawn masterpiece. There is a certain savage grandeur in the style, which is the true characteristic of Crébillon's genius. It was this tragedy that gave Voltaire the idea that it was better on the stage to strike a strong, than a well-directed blow. All the spectators enthusiastically decided that Crébillon delineated hate as Racine did love. The aged Boileau, who was near his end, and would have been glad to have had French literature terminate with himself, said that this success was scandalous. "I have lived too long," he cried, in violent ill-humor. "To what Visigoth do I leave the French stage a prey! The

Pradons, whom we have so often ridiculed, were eagles compared to these." Boileau had some resemblance to old Nestor in the Iliad, who said to the Greek kings, "I counsel you to listen to me, for I formerly associated with men who were better than yourselves." The parterre avenged Crébillon for Boileau's bitter critique, for in eight days two editions of *Rhadamiste* were exhausted. Nor was this all; the piece, when played at Versailles, was applauded to the echo.

During the rehearsal of *Rhadamiste*, Crébillon told his friends that he was going to surprise the public by a master-stroke. He was anything but modest, and spoke of his genius as another man would speak of his wine or his horse. Nevertheless, at the end of the second act he trembled for his success, for if the spectators were surprised, it was that they did not understand what was going on. But at last, when the curtain fell, Crébillon's name was received with acclamation. The vigorous beauties of his pencil had triumphed over his faults of style and composition. The Abbé de Chaulieu, who in his last days was still a man of wit, said that this play of *Rhadamiste* would have been plain enough had it not been for the *exposition*.

It was the third triumph Crébillon had gained. "Like the gods of Homer," he said, "I took three steps and I reached the goal." The poet was not long, however, in exhausting all his resources. He borrowed three thousand crowns from Baron Hoguer, who was the providence of literature under the regency; he sold his copyright of a tragedy to a usurer before it was written, wishing to put off as far as

possible the moment when he should be forced to change his mode of living. He calculated on the success of *Xercès*, but that tragedy was hissed. Crébillon was a man of heart and courage. He entered his house with a calm and smiling countenance. "Well?" asked Madame Crébillon, who had been anxiously awaiting his return. "Well, they have hissed my piece. To-morrow we will resume our old habits."

The next day Crébillon returned to the Place Moubert, where he found small apartments near his father-in-law's, who in evil days could still offer to his son a corner of his table. Out of all his splendid establishment, Crébillon only reserved a dozen dogs and cats. As D'Alembert says, "he passed without an effort, like Alcibiades of old, from the luxuries of Persia to the austerities of Sparta, and found himself, as Alcibiades doubtless did not, happier in his latter estate than in his former."

Charlotte Péaget carried to her retreat the same manners she had shown in society. Not once did she repine. Perhaps she appeared still more charming to the hissed and penniless poet. The poor woman concealed their wretchedness from him with touching delicacy. She spread such a charm over the gloomy house, that he believed himself almost rich; like King Midas, she had the art of changing everything she touched to gold; that is to say, of giving everything life and gayety by her adorable grace. Blessed are the poets who, like Crébillon, have learned that charms and beauty are an inexhaustible fortune. Madame Crébillon never complained; she was proud of the poet's glory, she ever

encouraged him in his lofty character, she listened with pious resignation to all his dreams of triumph; she knew the right moment to throw herself in his arms, when he declared that he had nothing more to expect from the world. For all this, she ventured one day when there was no money in the house, on seeing him come in with a dog under each arm, to say, "Take care, Monsieur de Crébillon: we have eight dogs, we have fifteen cats."—"Well, madame, don't I know it? But see what a pitiful air these two dogs have; could I leave them to die of hunger in the streets?"—"Do you not foresee, Monsieur de Crébillon, that they will die of hunger here? I appreciate your love and pity for the poor animals, but it will not do to make your house an hospital for lost dogs."—"Why do you despair? God does not abandon genius and beauty. There is a report that I am to be admitted a member of the Academy."—"I do not think you will," said Madame de Crébillon; "Fontenelle and La Motte, who are only wits, would not permit a man like you to sit beside themselves, for if you were in the Academy, would you not be its king!"

Crébillon made his application for membership in the Academy; but, as his wife had foreseen, Fontenelle and La Motte succeeded in excluding him. Do you know who the glorious individuals were whom these two writers succeeded in getting into the Academy while the author of *Rhadamiste* was waiting at the door? Danchet, Larivière, Massieu, Roquette, Fraguier, Bosvin, Nesmont, Abeille, Roland, Portail, Languet, Duboz, Sallier, Gondrin, D'Olivet, Fleurian, Gedoyn, Alari. It will be seen

that small literary piques have always existed in France, as in these later times. A great number of mediocrities slip slyly in when the door is half-opened for a man of genius.

Although Crébillon hated libels and satire, he could not restrain himself one day when in good spirits from rhyming off, in marotic verse, a fable, very bitter in its application against La Motte, Danchet, and Fontenelle. La Motte was designated under the name of a mole; he had already become blind. Danchet, who was a Hercules in stature, was painted as a camel; Fontenelle, in allusion to his finesse, wore a fox's skin. The satire ran all over Paris. The three comrades no longer contented themselves in closing the avenues of the Academy to Crébillon, but sought to ruin him in public estimation. They had no trouble at the court in succeeding in this odious design. Apropos to this I find these lines in D'Alembert: "It is well to remark, as a trait worthy of preservation in the history of human follies, that the enemies of Crébillon, not being able to bring any charge against the man, set to work to find in his plays proofs of the perversity of his character. None but a black-hearted man, according to them, could choose the subject he did."

Poor Crébillon, who picked up abandoned dogs and put them under his tattered cloak, wrote as follows in one of the prefaces of *Atrée:* "I have been charged with all the iniquities of this personage, and I am still regarded in some places as a man who is not safe to live with." Can it be believed that men of talent like La Motte and Fontenelle, I do not speak of Danchet, should have persisted in making war

upon a poor man, artless and noble-minded, who had injured only the tyrants of his tragedies? La Motte, the royal censor, had to be entreated a long time to grant his approbation to Semiramis: at last, the few protectors of Crébillon having represented to the author of *Inez de Castro*, that rather more charity was needful in literary manners, La Motte thus granted his *imprimatur:* "I have read, by order of Monseigneur the Chancellor, Semiramis, a tragedy, by M. de Crébillon, and I think that the death of Semiramis, in default of remorse, may permit one to tolerate the publication of that tragedy." What could be more pleasant than the reasons and the style of monsieur the royal censor?

All these literary thorns only gave the greater charm to Crébillon's home, but we are opening the most touching page of his life.*

One evening, on returning after a discussion more noisy than literary at the Café Procope, Crébillon found his wife very much agitated, pressing to her bosom their sleeping infant: "Charlotte, what has happened?"—"I am afraid," she said, shuddering and looking toward the bed. "What folly, you are afraid of shadows, like a child."—"Yes, I am afraid of shadows: a little while ago I was about retiring: you see, I am but half dressed. In drawing aside the curtain I saw a spectre glide past the foot of the bed; I almost fainted, and scarcely had strength enough to reach the child's cradle."—"You are a child yourself, you saw only the shadow of the curtain."—"No, no," said the young wife, seizing the

* We have followed for this account the hints of Baron Hoguer and the Abbé de Laporte.

poet's hand, "it was Death; I recognised him, for it is not the first time he has approached me. Ah, my friend, with what grief and terror I shall lay me down beneath the ground! If you love me as I do you, do not quit me any more for an instant: help me to die. If you are near me, I shall think that I am but going to sleep."

Crébillon, pale and shuddering, took his son and laid him in his cradle. He returned to his wife, embraced her, and in vain sought for words to divert her attention, and lead her to less sombre thoughts. He persuaded her, with difficulty, to go to rest; she slept but little. He remained silent before the bed, praying in his soul, for he believed, perhaps, more than Charlotte, in presentiments. Finding that she was at last asleep, he lay down himself. When he awoke in the morning he found Charlotte, in a partially-raised posture, watching his sleep. He was terrified at her worn, pale look, and the supernatural brilliancy of her eyes — as easily moved as an infant, he could not restrain two tears. She threw herself despairingly into his arms, and covered him with tears and kisses. "It is over," she said, in a broken voice, "see, my heart beats too violently to beat long. But I shall die uncomplaining; for I see well, by your tears that you will remember me."

Crébillon rose, and ran for his father-in-law. "Alas!" said the poor apothecary, "the mother, who was as good and fair as the daughter, died at twenty-six. It was the heart that killed the mother, and it will kill the daughter."

All the celebrated physicians were called in; but before they had agreed on a course of treatment,

Marie Charlotte Péaget quietly expired at eleven o'clock the following evening. Crébillon, inconsolable, was not afraid of ridicule in weeping for his wife; he mourned for her for half a century, that is to say, until the end of his life. For the space of two years he was scarcely seen at the Comédie Française. He had the air of a man of another age, so much did he seem a stranger to all that was passing about him. It might be said that he still lived with his divine Charlotte. The beloved dead live in our hearts; he saw and conversed with her incessantly. After fifteen years of mourning, he was surprised in his solitude, talking aloud to Charlotte, relating to her his vexations, reminding her of their happy days. "Ah! Charlotte, they all talk to me of my fame, but I think only of thee."

Crébillon, the son, who never displayed a single good impulse in his books, can he never have thought of his mother, she who addressed these sublime words to his father: "If you are near me when I die, *I shall think that I am but going to sleep.*" We may almost believe so. According to a letter of the tragic poet, the author of the *Sofa* was a good son, who came and smoked a pipe with him once a week.

Crébillon's friends, anxious about his prospects, had advised him for a year past to present himself at the court, where he was acknowledged to be a man of genius. Soon after he lost his wife, he abruptly left Paris to reside at Versailles. But as at Paris, so at Versailles, he lived, shut up in his apartment, in the midst of lugubrious visions, so that he was scarcely noticed — the king, seeing only a sort of

Danubian peasant, proud in his genius and in his poverty, received him with a coldness almost disdainful. Crébillon, moreover, did not understand his position at Versailles. It was that of an unsophisticated philosopher who had studied heroes, not men. Convinced at last that a *poet at court is of small account*, he returned to Paris to live more nobly in the midst of his poverty and his heroes. He retired to the *Marais*, Rue des Douze-Portes, taking with him only a poor bed, a table, two chairs, and an arm-chair, "in case an honest man should come to see me."

Irritated at having been rebuffed at Versailles, ashamed of having solicited the justice of the king in vain, he wished henceforth to believe in nothing but liberty. "Liberty," he said, "is the sentiment engraved most deeply in my heart." He unintentionally, perhaps, revenged himself in his first work. He commences the tragedy of *Cromwell:* "It is an altar which I raise to liberty." According to D'Alembert, "he read some scenes of it to his friends, in which the aversion of the English for arbitrary power was depicted with savage energy. In consequence he was forbidden to continue the piece." His Cromwell was a rascal, but a rascal whom the whole world would have admired on the stage, from the grand and heroic aspect in which the author would have placed him. From that day he had enemies, but had he not those from the first night of *Electre?* Glory here below has no other attendants.

But still he was without money. By degrees, without having foreseen it, he heard creditors buzzing about his ears like a swarm of wasps. His the-

atrical copyrights were seized. He, for the first time in France, obtained a decision of parliament which decreed that works of imagination were not attachable. His theatrical income was therefore saved.

Several years passed without bringing another triumph. Forced by the court to break off his tragedy of Cromwell, he brought out Semiramis. This piece fell almost without a sound, as Xercès had done a short time before. Believing that the French public would not accustom themselves to the "sombre horrors of the tempests of human passion," he tried to arm himself against his own nature, fight and subdue it. The tragedy of Pyrrhus, which recalled the tender shades of Racine, cost him five years labor. So rigid was the rule of custom at that time in France, that this worthless tragedy, a painting without style or relief, of grimace rather than expression, was applauded by the spectators with enthusiasm. As a man of talent, Crébillon was not blinded by this triumph of bad taste. "That," said he, "is only a shadow of a tragedy."

Pyrrhus, nevertheless, had only transient success. It was finally understood that it was only an exotic that grew but feebly beneath a foreign sky. Crébillon, in despair at having lost so much time in writing a work which had compromised his reputation, and disgusted by certain shameless coteries who gadded about from one literary café to another, singing his downfall, retired entirely from the world. He went often to the theatre, where he found a few friends to discuss the masterpieces and admire the masterpieces to be written, but at last he gave up going at all.

He lived then without any other friends than his heroes and his dogs, reading passionately the Calprenède, and relating romances to himself. His son testifies to having seen fifteen dogs and as many cats barking and mewing about his father, who spoke to them much more affectionately than to himself. According to Fréron, "He picked up and carried under his cloak all the dogs he found in the street; he bestowed his hospitality upon them with tears in his eyes, but he exacted an aptitude for certain exercises from them. When, after the prescribed term, the pupil was convicted of not having profited by the advantages of education, the author of *Rhadamiste* took him again under his cloak, dropped him at the corner of the street, and ran away sighing.

At La Motte's death, Crébillon at last entered the Academy. He replaced Lériget de la Fage. Thirty years after he was himself replaced by Voisenon. As he was always a singular, if not an eccentric man, he wrote his opening address in verse, which had never been done before. When he pronounced the line which has not been forgotten—

Malice has never envenomed my pen—

he was applauded with enthusiasm and veneration. His fable against his three inveterate enemies was not regarded, for it was more piquant than bitter. From this day, but only from this day, Crébillon was recognised as a man of feeling and a man of genius. It was somewhat late; he had lost his wife, his son spent his time with boon companions, he found himself alone, expecting nothing more from the world. Lazier than a lazzarone, he passed whole years with-

out writing a line. Still his ever-ardent imagination projected more barbarous tragedies. Having a prodigious memory, he composed and rhymed five acts without writing a word. Thinking he had produced a masterpiece, he invited a few academicians to his house to hear a new tragedy. He recited the five acts without pausing. Judging that the Areopagus was not mute in admiration of the piece, he said, without petulance, "You see, my friends, I had good reasons for not writing my tragedy."—"Why?" asked Gedoyn. "Because I should have had the trouble of throwing it into the fire. I am going to forget it, which is sooner done."

When Crébillon, as it appeared, was no more to be dreaded in the world of letters, when it was fully decided that he was a genius in his decline, the same men who had denied his strength thought that it was a cunning way of opposing Voltaire to praise up Crébillon, on condition of one day praising up Voltaire when another dominant star should appear in the horizon. "They went," says a critic, "wishing to humiliate the author of *Œdipus*, of *Brutus*, and of *Zaire*, and sought out, in the depths of his retreat, the old and wornout Crébillon, who, silent and solitary for thirty years, could no longer be formidable to them, but whom they flattered themselves they could oppose like a sort of phantom to the brilliant author by whom they saw they were eclipsed, as the leaguers formerly drew an old cardinal out of the obscurity in which he lived, to give him the vain title of king, and reign under his name." There were then the Crébillonists and the Voltairians; the former, having possession of all the

roads to fame, succeeded for a long time in blinding the public. Voltaire passed for a man of talent, Crébillon for the sole inheritor of the sceptre of Corneille and Racine. The cabal drew up the formula which is still in force: Corneille the grand, Racine the tender, Crébillon the tragic. Crébillon had an immense advantage over Voltaire — he had done nothing for thirty years. His friends, or rather Voltaire's enemies, all said that the author of *Rhadamiste* was completing a tragedy, a marvel of dramatic art, entitled *Catilina*. This work was promised for too long a time, the public at last crying with Cicero, "How long, O Catiline, wilt thou abuse our patience!"

It is known that Madame de Pompadour, wearied by Voltaire's ambition, passed with all her forces to the camp of Crébillon; it is not forgotten that she received him at court, and recommended him to the care of Louis XV. as a great poet, poor and proud. In his turn, Crébillon was appointed the royal censor.

The war was therefore serious, even on Voltaire's side, who thought himself obliged, in order to gain the victory, to recompose all Crébillon's pieces. Gigantic and puerile courage truly — which must appear almost fabulous to certain writers of our day, who revenge themselves by abuse, for neither Voltaire nor Crébillon ever wrote a line against one another.

Catilina was at last produced with great éclat. The entire court was present at the first representation, and contributed without doubt much to its success. The old poet, encouraged by this, composed

the *Triumvirat* with renewed ardor, but it was seen, as afterward at the representation of Voltaire's *Irene*, that the poet was no more than the shadow of himself. The eighty years of Crébillon were respected, the audience applauded with some sympathy, but after a few days the *Triumvirat* was played in solitude. Crébillon had but one thing more to do: he died. The world was then in the year 1762.

Voltaire's enemies did not stop at Crébillon's death. They had used a shadow for their combat, they now wished to fight upon a tomb. It was decided at Versailles that a mausoleum should be raised "to the first poet of the age." But Louis XV. did not dare to do for Crébillon what Louis XIV. had not done for Molière, Corneille, and Racine. The monument was ordered in a loud voice, but it was whispered to the sculptor not to hurry himself; thus thirty years were needed to complete the work.

Crébillon, it can not be denied, was one of those men who distinguish themselves in their epoch by their original and marked demeanor. This savage genius, striking us here and there by beauties of a noble mould, by bold outline, brilliant coloring, which most often repulses us by its barbarous manner, was the genius of Crébillon. Animation, grace, and attractiveness, which pre-eminently characterize the genius of our nation, Crébillon never possessed; thus, with all his vigor and boldness, he never succeeded in creating a living work. He has drawn human perversity with a bold and manly pencil; he has exhibited the fratricide brother, the infanticide father, the parricide son; but he has never been able

to reach the majestic, almost sacred horror which pervades the Greek tragedy. Nevertheless Jean-Jacques Rousseau acknowledged that Crébillon alone, of all our tragic poets, recalled to him the grand characteristics of the Greeks; it was merely by this naked terror, for human and philosophic sentiment were wanting to the French Æschylus.

There is a very beautiful portrait of Crébillon by La Tour still in existence. It will be imagined that this man, so terrible in his dramatic fury, was of a dark and sombre mien. He was a fair-complexioned, mild-looking man, with fine blue eyes, which were much admired by the women of his time. In this case the appearance did not denote the man any more than in Florian, who was dark, though a humorist. It must be said, however, that by dint of borrowing the mien of his heroes, and bending his eyebrows in his tragic creations, Crébillon ended by looking a little more like the man of his works. He was besides impatient and choleric, even with his dogs, even with that gentle and poetic Charlotte Péaget, who resigned herself so well to his good or evil fortune, to his days of extravagance and folly when he affected the nobleman, to his days of extreme prudence when he withdrew himself from the world.

CRÉBILLON THE GAY.

Is the younger Crébillon dead? Doubt would be admissible were it not one hundred and thirty-eight years since he first made his appearance in the world. The registry of his death has never been discovered, either in Burgundy the home of his family, in Paris where he dwelt, or in England the country of his wife. In 1770, his death was announced in the papers of the day; but in 1776 he reappeared at a soirée of Madame Geoffrin's. A year after, Monsieur Ducoudray, a literary grave-digger, who only wrote on men scarcely cold, addressed a letter to the public on the death of M. de Crébillon, royal censor: "I have already," says the Sieur Ducoudray, "strewed some flowers on the tombs of Saint-Foix, Gresset, De Belloy, Collardeau; the last especially has drawn from my enthusiasm a prose elegy, or an obituary notice, in the form of a conversation, in the Elysian Fields: to day I have boldly undertaken to sketch the historical eulogy of M. de Crébillon. To enter on the subject: M. de Crébillon has deceased, at the age of seventy, having fulfilled his duties as a Christian, with touching edification. He is the au-

thor of several works, the *Sofa*—if it is allowable to mention it—among others." Such are the flowers that the Sieur Ducoudray has strewn upon the tomb of Crébillon the Gay.*

Thus in 1777, it is clear that Crébillon died like a good Christian. However, could we credit Jules Janin, "in 1793, he had the good luck to save his wife, his fortune, and finally himself. I, however, imagine he must have trembled slightly if he saw Madame Dubarry turn pale in the fatal cart. Madame Dubarry! the last prevailing expression of Crébillon's novels.†"

Admitting that Crébillon was alive in 1793, he would have been unable to have saved his wife from the horrors of the Revolution, as, since the year 1761,‡ Madame de Crébillon had become a stranger to all earthly dangers. There is but little doubt that in 1793 Crébillon himself had been long dead; but it is beyond doubt that in 1770 his contemporaries published his death, and several years later he took his daily walk in the Rue Royale, Barrière Blanche, where he resided.

If, like myself, you have an hour to spare; if you

* Grimm diverts himself very pleasantly over these flowers, which after all, are not from the garden of Monsieur Ducoudray; for the Sieur Ducoudray admits having gathered them from a periodical of the day, "and for the reason," he said, "that I like to support my opinion."

† M. Janin says with Voltaire, that accuracy in works of wit is the height of folly.

‡ My son was born on the 7th of February, 1708. In 1740 he married Miss Stafford, aunt of Lord Stafford, of a family which may be regarded as the first in England—its name is Howard. My son had but one child from this marriage, a boy, who is dead as well as his mother. This is all I know of a family that will soon be extinct. —(From a letter of Crébillon the father, dated January 29th, 1761.)

would again like to study a little closer the men and women of the eighteenth century, deign to follow me through this past, already much obscured by the paradoxes of the historian, by the shadow Time casts behind him, and by the tall weeds which conceal so rapidly all that has ceased to live. To see, to hear, and to understand the younger Crébillon, this bad and enticing novelist, who spoke so scientifically of the *heart* and *head*, when the heart and head of France were only raised from the gilded Sofa to the tester of the bed — let us discreetly take part in one of the last soirées of good Madame Geoffrin, the Sablière or Ninon of a former age.

It is in 1776, Madame Geoffrin having been indisposed for some days, has only assembled in her little saloon three or four philosophers, three or four little dogs, and three or four new books which are intended to furnish the philosophers with matter for discussion.

The philosophers are Grimm, Diderot, d'Alembert, and Mademoiselle Clairon; among the books scattered upon the mantel we notice *l'Ecole des Peres*, a novel by Rétif de la Breton; *Coriolan*, a wretched tragedy performed during the week; some tales in verse, such as *La Tentation*, by the Marquis of St. Marc, and Madame de Turpin's *Les Heures de Cythère*. Although it is spring, old Madame Geoffrin receives her habitual guests before a good fire, even that does not prevent her from wearing that old pelisse of rose-colored taffetas, the fur-trimming of which was a present from the empress of Russia. "Grimm," said suddenly Madame Geoffrin, dropping her lapdog on the floor, "have you read that absurdity which bears the title of *Les Heures de*

Cythère?" Grimm took the book, and turning the leaves through his fingers: "It is a miserable work," said he, smiling, "though printed at Paphos with the privilege of the Graces."—"Such Graces are well rumpled. To whom do you attribute this rhapsody?" asked Madame Geoffrin. "Some give it to the Countess de Turpin, who was, as you know (after Madame Favart), the late Abbé de Voisenon's best friend; but Madame de Turpin herself attributes the work to a young count whom she has condescended to matronize."—"Perhaps there is some means of uniting these two opinions; there are certainly many things in these poems which it would be infinitely more natural to have found in a tête-à-tête than to have found alone with either party."—"It appears," said D'Alembert, "that this Madame de Turpin is preparing an edition of twenty volumes, of the works of her friend the late Abbé Voisenon."—"That will be a pretty butterfly crushed in a folio," said Diderot; "in truth we have done well in undertaking to build up something durable among ourselves like the *Encyclopedia;* for in looking at all these card-castles built by the Voisenons, the Dorats, the Crébillons . . . . ."

On the instant the door opened, and there appeared as if by magic, a pale face, almost buried in a powdered wig. This ghostly personage advanced gravely toward the mistress of the house. "Madame, permit a man who has retired from the world, to remind you that he has loved and cherished you before all other women."—"If I do not deceive myself," said Madame Geoffrin, with a perceptible tremor in her voice, "it is Crébillon."—"You have

said it, madame. It appears," he continued, turning toward Grimm, "the gazetteers have written my obituary. M. Grimm is a witness. I have quitted my grave expressly to correct the date of my death. How are you, Diderot? How are you, D'Alembert? Beautiful Clairon, permit me to kiss your feet. Now M. Grimm, take this seat by me, and listen to my troubles."

With increasing surprise, Grimm approached the fireplace; Crébillon ensconced himself in an armchair; the company formed a circle round him. "Monsieur de Grimm, you write the *Literary and Philosophical Gazette* of our day for the use of the sovereigns of the north, and such gentlemen of our own country, who can afford to pay you an annual subscription of one hundred crowns: this is well; you are perfectly right in so doing: and am I not likewise right in coming to rectify an error which concerns me specially?"—"One can not come too far for that," remarked Diderot. "I have become an entire stranger to the things of this world. All whom I loved are long since dead: my father, my wife, my son, my friends. I had formerly another friend, my Fame, which somewhat consoled me for the annoyances of this world: my Fame itself has not been able to survive me. Other times, other customs, other novels. It is the eternal law, I can not complain. Dead as I am, buried, as M. de Grimm has said, in the neglected leaves of the *Sofa* and *Tanzai*, I have the weakness to return from time to time to see what is passing in the world. There is in my neighborhood of the Rue Royale a chevalier, De Vieilsac, a subscriber, or sub-subscriber, to

the correspondence of M. de Grimm, whom I have only known about a year. We meet at a pharo-table, where I go every Friday, under the name of Sir Stafford, for I no longer care to prove that I am still among the living. The Chevalier de Vieilsac has often spoken to me of the two Crébillons, as having known them in their day. Thanks to the correspondence of M. de Grimm, he knows that I am dead: it was through him that I heard the news myself."

On this Crébillon drew from his pocket a manuscript sheet of Grimm's Journal (March 1771). There, said he, is my obituary notice:—

"It is nearly two months since we lost M. Claude Jolyot Crébillon, royal censor, celebrated by the memory of a father whose tragedies long shed a halo over the French stage. The son had a transitory celebrity; but it is long, very long, since he had the misfortune to find he had survived himself." So far said Crébillon there is nothing to be said. M. de Grimm shows himself even benevolent in his appreciation of my works, but is there much generosity when he winds up in these words?

The auditors leaned over the spectre with the most lively curiosity: "M. de Crébillon bore no resemblance to his writings; his conversation was neither very easy nor very sparkling; he used long phrases, and put them forward with pretension; he bore this character in the intimacy of the coteries where he lived, almost habitually; the Collés, the Monticours, his oldest friends, frequently took him to task on account of the extreme reserve and the great airs of propriety and dignity which he affected even in their maddest orgies."

"Clairon! Clairon!" exclaimed the ghost, "you knew me when I wrote *les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, in the time when you was Venus at the opera. Speak out the truth, was I not an agreeable guest after supper?"—"Adorable!" said the tragic actress, eying this strange spectre from head to foot; "you made less noise than the others; you left them to sing and argue; but when some witty saying, very delicate and very pointed, circulated, every one said at once, ah! Crébillon is here."—"Come, come," said Madame Geoffrin, taking the hand of Crébillon, "you are an old coquette, everybody has done you justice, for in your day you were read and loved."—"If M. de Crébillon," said Grimm, bowing, "can find leisure in the other world to turn over my journal, he will discover that I have been of the opinion of Sterne, Garrick, and Fielding, who have placed him in the front rank of French novelists."—"Say no more about it; but as in your editorial character you are so well posted in all that passes, tell me if the Abbé de Voisenon is still of this world."—"Oh, I can be responsible for his epitaph—he died last year."—"For the twentieth time," said Diderot.*—"I am sorry for it; for I have an account to settle with him; he has likewise written a very disrespectful obituary, as if he had written of some saint of his church or his acquaintance."

Crébillon drew from the skirts of his coat the new edition of the *Literary and Critical Anecdotes on the best-known Authors*, and read in a loud voice:—

* It is known that the Abbé de Voisenon was for sixty years at the point of death, as they said at that time.

"'Crébillon, the father, had genius but no wit, Crébillon, the son, had wit but no genius.'

"Thus far it is marvellous, but wait a little.

"'He had the reputation of being impudent with women without having anything to justify his impudence. On the death of his father, Madame de Pompadour got him a pension of two thousand livres from the privy purse, which enabled him to pass his life in idleness about the streets of Paris, speaking ill of women and the nobility.'*

"Do you hear, about the streets of Paris?"—"Look you, Crébillon," said Madame Geoffrin, "your manner of living was never understood; you would be seen every day successively for six weeks; then, sometimes, six years would elapse without your even being heard of. Except," continued she with emphasis, "through your 'sanctions' as royal censor."—"Since you no longer belong to this world," said Mademoiselle Clairon, "you can tell us what you formerly did in it."

"It is very simple, or rather very extravagant. My father lived like Socrates, and I like Alcibiades; my father wrote sombre tragedies, and I, rose-colored novels."—"We know all that; it is the details we want."—"I have spent my life laboriously in losing my time. I do not wish you to waste yours in listening to me."—"Come, do not wait to be pressed, for

* Beauvoisin did not show any more amiability toward Crébillon, in her notes to Bachaumont: "Pedant, miserable pedant, you are such a pedant, so grave, so dry, and so formal, that I will not sup with you at Monticour's. You are nothing but a broom-stick dressed up."

But these lines are applied to Crébillon in his old age. The memoirs of the time, those of Marmontel among others, represent him as a very amiable, very witty, and very lively companion.

a digression more or less."—"You have said it; life is only a digression of nature."—"Let us have no set phrases, or I will relate myself all the curious things I know about you."

Crébillon looked at the actress, took her hand, and said, with the smile of a faded pastel, "I have no hesitation in speaking before you as before our good Mother Geoffrin; but I am frightened at all these great encyclopedic ears, which are open alongside of me. Will Diderot and D'Alembert understand a word of what they call my jargon?"—"Did I not write *Les Bijoux indiscrets?*" exclaimed Diderot. "Am I not the son of Madame de Tencin?" said D'Alembert, with a melancholy expression.—"Well, then, listen, if it will amuse you."

When they were all seated in a circle before the fire, Crébillon began thus :—

"I was born, which, as my friend Sterne said, is, perhaps, the only thing I have not cause to doubt; I came into the world in the Place Maubert, in 1707. I remember that my first friends were some dogs and ravens. My father was my teacher; from which cause I knew how to smoke before I understood Greek. Crébillon the Tragic had likewise his hours of gayety; he lived somewhat like a true gentleman, and somewhat like a sage, and I have lived somewhat like him.

"I have always cultivated the idea that originality was the true touchstone of all genuine wit; we must convince ourselves that in following recognised principles we are never but ordinary men; that mankind only admire that which strikes them, and singularity alone produces this effect. We can not

therefore be too eccentric; that is, we can not affect too much to differ from every one, in both our manners and our ideas. An eccentricity, which is ours only, does us more honor than a merit which we share with another. This explains why I wrote frivolous novels under the same roof where my father composed *Catilina*."—"Monsieur Crébillon the Gay," interrupted Diderot, "you are a great philosopher."—"You are too well acquainted with the history of my father for me to dwell long upon it. He had the misfortune to lose my mother after seven years of a very happy marriage. He was never consoled. Madame de Villeneuve, too celebrated by her love adventures, installed herself at his house to dissipate his grief. She remained there more than thirty years without succeeding. My father loved dogs, cats, and ravens, and Madame de Villeneuve was for him but an additional beast. As soon as she put her foot in the house, I beat a retreat in all haste.

"I was just twenty; I scarcely knew anything of life, and wished to learn everything at once.

"I had known Pont-de-Veyle in the green-room of the Comedié-Française, where I went but seldom. There existed then a little academy formed of young noblemen, very much in love with literature and opera-girls, among whom were Maurepas, Caylus, Surgères, Duclos, Voisenon, Monticour, and Pont-de-Veyle. Collé had been admitted on account of his gayety, and they were willing to admit me because I was the son of my father.

"I entered, then, into the world through folding doors, thrown wide open. I feared at first the re-

proaches of my father; but on our first meeting, he congratulated me warmly upon my reception at the *Academie de ces Messieurs.* Such was the name it bore; and as he was in funds that day, he gave me twenty louis with much good grace.

"You have forgotten, O grave D'Alembert! you who have judged without hearing us, what were the works of this academy which left me no desire to belong to the other. We made pageants which were performed in the saloons, especially in those of the ballet-girls. It often occurred that we performed ourselves on the stage at the fair. It was, if my memory serves, in the fine carnival of 1730. Moreover, we made verses on all grotesque, strange, serious, and droll events that agitated France. It was a rhyming gazette in the style of Scarron. Of all this wit, of all this gayety, of all this licentiousness, there only remain those two celebrated volumes entitled, *Le Recueil de ces Messieurs.**

* We find among other works in the *Recueil de ces Messieurs Ballets*, like *Les Characteres de la Folie*, tales like *Acajou et Zymplile*, letters imitated from the *Lettres persanes*, and from the *Amusements serieux et comiques* of Dufresny, oriental tales, dialogues of the dead.

Boucher, who belonged to the society of *these gentlemen*, sometimes *illustrated* their fancies. Here are the inexplicable subjects of ten prints for which Duclos, Caylus, Surgères, and Crébillon, each wrote a tale. Is it not a curious task to study in them the imagination of the tale-writers of a hundred years ago?

I.—The frontispiece represents the author in his dressing-gown, writing in his study, surrounded by frolicsome sprites, rats, porcelain figures, butterflies, and smoke.

II.—The prince Percebourçe, the hero of the tale, is represented taking a walk in the path of ideas. He is dressed in the French style, according to the fashion and custom of the time (1740).

III.—The prince Percebourse is in conversation with the fairy of the scarf, who has come out of a gooseberry that he has just picked.

IV.—Two little female-dwarfs, found in another gooseberry, are trying to give a cap to the prince, who is in great embarrassment.

"Would it not, I ask you, have been wise to have collected all the works of our Academy, and have transmitted them to posterity, as they have done for the Academy of Sciences? And again where is the use of preserving the dull papers of the learned when the science of to-morrow throws into oblivion that of to-day, while our writings were the latest expression of the wild licentiousness of French wit?

"Ah, those were the days! It was then only necessary to success to say thrice to a woman that she was handsome; from the first she would believe you religiously, she would thank you at the second, and most commonly reward you at the third.

"In those days I displayed boldly my face of twenty. There is a portrait of me by Boucher,* which

V.—The prince, seated in the same path of ideas, going to eat an apricot, produces from it the head of a young princess, of a rather sad and languishing expression.

VI.—Percebourse, having sought for the body of this princess, finds it with some difficulty, and fits on the pretty head and the little hands that belong to it.

VII.—The fairy Vicieuse marries Prince Percebourse to the princess Pensive.

VIII.—The princess Pensive is arrested by the giant Borgne.

IX.—The fairy Lutine takes care of a young child called the prince des Coudes, and who appears destined to be the lover of Jaunillaune, or the yellow infant, the daughter of Pensive and Percebourse.

X.—Pensive upsets a magic glass, which draws down upon her the maledictions of the enchanter Grossourcils and the fairy Robinet.

* There is also a portrait of Crébillon the younger in the Museum at Versailles. According to this portrait, which must be by one of the Vanloos, Crébillon is scarcely more the man of his novels than his father was the man of tragedy. This head at once frivolous and grave, which put together the great events of the *Sofa*, probably derives its expression of gayety from his character of royal censor. In fact, could Crébillon the younger, who was above all a man of wit, regard seriously that ludicrous office which obliged him to write on a new edition of the works of Corneille, or a new translation of the works of Homer: "*I have read, by order of my lord-chancellor, the*

represents me in all the extravagance of youth. I was certainly not as handsome as the Apollo of Phidias; but more than one woman found me much more loveable than a statue of Phidias. I wished to follow the profession of letters, and had even produced some frivolous stories. I soon learned that before writing romances it was necessary to make them. We never relate well the passions of another but through the remembrance of passions that still agitate our hearts.

"I therefore entered in campaign to make romances before writing them. All the saloons and all the theatres were open to me; and I must confess, though not to my shame, that the first time I found myself tête-à-tête with an actress who had been tête-à-tête with all the world, I trembled like a scholar who did not know his lesson.

"A few days after I fell in love with Madame de Margy.* Surgères had presented me to her as a man to whom was destined all the conquests of wit and of the heart. She was majestically beautiful; though dressed without coquetry, she did not neglect ornament; she repaired with care the charms that near forty years had stolen from her. Patient in her vengeance as in her pleasures she knew how to abide her time.

"We met *not* by chance alone before the fire one evening in her saloon, while all her guests were engaged at ombre. I was going to open my heart to her, but at her first glance my timidity suddenly seized me.

new translation of the Iliad *(or the new edition of the* Cid*), and I find nothing therein to prevent their being printed."*

* First heroine of *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit,* under the name of the Marchioness de Lursay.

Women who are loved have positively the power of the gods, for their lovers always tremble in their presence. Perceiving my trouble and embarrassment, Madame de Margy had the wit to point out the way to me, in speaking of a comedy that then held the stage. 'I find,' she said, 'in this play many parts handled with skill. There is, above all, a declaration of love, which is extremely delicate.'—'I was likewise,' I replied, 'struck with this declaration, and I give the author the more credit, as I believe this situation very difficult to manage well.' A few phrases more and my declaration was made. 'If I was younger,' she said, 'I might believe you; but I am thirty-seven.'—'It is not that in you, madame, that charms me the least. When a woman is young, she is only sensible of the charm of inspiring passions. The merit of attaching one heart for ever is not worth that of enchaining several; more in suspense than fixed, always given up to caprice, she thinks less of him who loves her to-day than of him who will love her to-morrow. She is always expecting pleasure, but never seizes it. Often she knows as little the one who quits as the one who succeeds: perhaps, could she have kept him longer, she would have loved him. A young woman depends less upon herself than upon circumstances, and these are so many and so unforeseen, that it is not astonishing if, after several adventures, she has neither known love nor her heart; but when she feels that youth is giving place to solitude, she attaches herself with all her strength to the last green branch that she has seized; all that her conquest has cost makes it precious to her. Constant, for she would lose by not

being so, her heart by degrees becomes accustomed to the same sentiment. When sought by the crowd she abandoned her heart to them; now that a solitary lover remains, she attaches herself strongly to him. Come, come, what is thought a woman's last caprice is more often her first passion.'

"In speaking thus to the countess, I had hit upon the truth: I was the last resource of this till then unconquered heart. For one who wished to be a novelist, I could scarcely have done better; for Madame de Margy having seen much could impart much. In passing through the world, she had studied it; and it often happened that she dictated and I wrote.

"Of what use to relate to you her tragic fury when I wished to leave her? A woman at twenty-two loses a lover without a thought, at thirty she weeps, at forty she abandons herself to despair. A young heart is like the spring, it forgets the flowers of yesterday in those of to-day; but when autumn comes and a blossom resists the November blasts, it is no longer a flower that fades, but an entire life. An order from the lieutenant of police, which consigned me to Vincennes, for having written, under the title of *l'Ecumoire*, a satirical romance against the Cardinal de Rohan, the Bull *Unigenitus*, and the Duchess of Maine, rid me of Madame de Margy. I did not remain long in this prison, which was as you all know, a palace for captives.

"I returned again to the street St. André des Arts, and continued to see the best company — ruined gentlemen living upon their neighbors, rich actresses living with ruined gentlemen. My distinguished

friends commenced to reach high preferments; instance Surgères, Maurepas, Voisenon.

"It was in 1740. One day in the afternoon I was engaged on that famous moral tale known as the *Sofa*, when my valet informed me that a lady, closely-veiled, wished to see me. I went to meet her with a kind of presentiment. 'Mon Dieu! sir,' she said to me, when seated on the sofa of my little saloon, 'nothing can be more simple, I have come from London to offer you my hand.'*

"Though habituated to all sorts of strange adventures, I confess I must have exhibited great surprise. Fortunately the lady had raised her veil. I had been able to judge that she was handsome, as I had already remarked her grace and distinction.

* "There happened to him," says M. Jules Janin, "a piece of good luck, which he had not even imagined in a novel. He was a prey to all the well-grounded anxieties, which gave so many charms to the literary life of that time, when, one morning, an English lady requested to see him. She was a pretty young lady, rich, and of good family, who had been seized with a violent passion for *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*. She gave her fortune and her hand to Jolyot de Crébillon the younger."

The *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy*, tell us in their turn: "One day he saw the arrival of a handsome lady, who told him among other things, that she had read the *Sofa*; that she felt for him, M. de Crébillon, the author of so fine a work and royal censor, a sentiment of admiration, esteem, and unconquerable love; that she had come from England on purpose to ask him in marriage, and that she was the eldest daughter of Lord Stafford, which was the exact truth in every particular. As she was a single woman, she became Lady Crébillon in the course of a fortnight."

"It was not," says Grimm, "until after the death of this tender heroine, that the circumstances of a marriage so romantic were known: thus everything in the world is ruled by chance. The author of a licentious tale inspires an ardent passion in a noble lady, who is willing to cross the sea in search of him, and the lover of the new Heloise, of all lovers, the most passionate and most faithful, is compelled to marry his servant-maid."

'Madame, you see me confounded by so much happiness; although marriage has never been among my habits, permit me to throw myself at your feet, and kiss the hand you deign to offer me.' In fact I threw myself, completely bewildered, at the feet of Miss Stafford. 'Madame, will you explain . . . ?' —'Nothing is more simple. My fortune is in my own hands; I had resolved to bestow it only with my heart; but where to bestow my heart was the difficulty. I have waited and I have sought, I should have waited and have sought still, had I not met with one of your works. You recall, without doubt, for you have infused in it so much of yourself, *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, a delicious book, which has but one fault, which is, that the heart has too much head. After having read it twenty times, I ordered my horses, embarked at Dover, took the post at Calais, and arrived yesterday at Paris. I lost an entire day (for I should have seen you yesterday) in recruiting myself, and in finding you out. Heaven be praised, you are there such as I imagined you, young, witty, distinguished.'

"Thus spoke Miss Stafford. I was so little prepared for an adventure of this nature, that I knew not what to say. I gazed into her beautiful eyes, sparkling with love and pleasure. Another in my place would have imagined that he was the dupe of an adventuress without heart or money; for my part I felt at once that Miss Stafford was really Miss Stafford, that is to say, one of the handsomest, richest, and most adorable young ladies of Great Britain.

"We were not married until after a delay of six

weeks. Miss Stafford wrote to her father, who was only softened at the fifth or sixth letter: he ended by yielding, not because I was the author of *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, but because I was the son of M. Crébillon, a Burgundian gentleman,* member of the French Academy, author of *Electre* and *Rhadamiste*.

"Moreover, the six weeks' delay was not time lost. I passed all my days at the Hotel of London, at the feet of Miss Stafford. As soon as her father answered favorably, she begged me to conduct her to mine, which I did eagerly. Would you believe it, the good man, whom I have always loved so profoundly, found, like Miss Stafford, that *nothing could be more simple* than our marriage? It is true that then more than ever my father read the novels of *La Calprenède*, or imagined others of the same style. There was one person even more romantic than Miss Stafford, it was Crébillon the Tragic. As for me I seemed in a dream; it was in vain that I saw, heard, touched Miss Stafford. I could scarcely believe in my happiness; even to-day I can hardly believe it: at times it seems to me a romance I have not had time to write.

"You can well imagine that at that time money was scarce with me. My tales and novels sold well; they were reprinted every year, and translated into foreign languages, but thanks to the reprints and the bad faith of the publishers, I had scarcely two or three thousand livres income, barely enough to live with, on condition of dining out. The Abbé de Ber-

* We have seen in the history of Crébillon the Tragic how this nobility was an illusion.

nis, now a cardinal, was then in society on precisely the same footing.

"I informed Miss Stafford of my poverty, but was careful not to question her upon her fortune. It was only on the reading of our marriage contract that I learned the amount. One hundred thousand sterling! To me it seemed an epitome of the mines of Golconda and Peru. But Miss Stafford, soon Madame Crébillon, was far more handsome than rich.

"You must remember how all Paris raised its head in excitement on the news of this marriage. I might have sought for happiness in these rumors of worldly pride; but I understood that it is necessary in this world to conceal our happiness, if we do not wish to lose it. Love prefers silence and shade. We fled from the brilliant light of day; there were without doubt persons jealous of me among the high dignitaries of state, who saw with terror a man of wit become a millionaire. I received one morning a letter conceived in these terms:—

"'We, Lieutenant of Police, notify M. Claude Jolyot de Crébillon, that by a decree of the chancellor, we have been ordered to signify to him that he is exiled as the author of a book considered injurious to public morals, entitled, *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit.* By these presents the said Sieur de Crébillon is forbidden to remain longer in Paris. The royal clemency permits him otherwise to inhabit any province in France he may please to select.'

"Indignant at this order, I vainly ran to my friends and demanded justice. The most devoted feared an explosion that would be fatal to me; they advised

me to leave in silence, assuring me that at the end of a few months I should see the end of this ridiculous exile. I departed with my wife and Lord Stafford for England. I was besides desirous to study the men and things of that country. It was at London I made the acquaintance of Sterne, Fielding, and Garrick: three celebrated men whose friendship I have since always retained. After a sojourn of nearly two years we returned to France. I presumed I had regained the right of living in Paris; but I was informed that measures of extreme severity would be employed against me. Madame de Pompadour, whom may it please God not to exile from above, found my novels too licentious. It became necessary, therefore, to turn our course from Paris. We went at once to Bourbonne-les-Bains, at which place my father-in-law wished to pass the summer.

"Toward the commencement of November, we travelled in Burgundy, stopping at the different towns, visiting the churches and curiosities, and were well received in the different chateaux. My father had joined us at Dijon. In vain our friend, the president de Brosse, exerted all his high and powerful influence to open Paris to us. I was constrained to consider it as a favor to be allowed to live in Burgundy.

"In passing through Sens, six weeks previous, my wife, forcibly struck with the imposing beauty of the cathedral, and seduced by the attractive appearance of certain houses buried in trees, exclaimed, with a smile of rapture, "Ah, it would be happiness to live here!" When I saw that I must perforce resign myself to exile, I led Madame Crébillon to Sens.

"During five years, which passed like a dream,

and yet have effaced all the other years of my existence, we were happy in that city. My wife had given me a son, which, like herself, had prevented me from perceiving I was in exile. We inhabited a large house not far from the cathedral. We rarely left it, the garden affording us long and quiet walks. Occasionally, however, I had glowing recollections of Paris. I stretched my arms toward my past life, toward our wild pleasures, our maddening orgies; so true is it that happiness, be it the greatest, is incapable of satisfying the heart of man. Life is agitation; it is the combat, the struggle, the defeat, or the victory, of each day. It is only flowers and trees that can live upon the sun and air. To admit the truth, I had allowed myself to be seized with ennui, and it was only after I had quitted Sens that I discovered that I should always have remained there. I wish to return there some day. It is thirty years since I made myself the promise to do so; but who shall I find there now?

"You have seen that, until now, *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit*, after having given to me a beautiful wife and a large fortune, provoked against me an order of exile. Would you believe that the author of *Les Egarements du Cœur et de l'Esprit* was appointed to be royal censor? Contradiction of contradictions! why should we be surprised? We live under the reign of women.

"Madame de Pompadour, whom my novels had first shocked, called me to her, and showed me an unbounded confidence. 'You have seen the marchioness,' said Madame Crébillon to me one evening. 'She is charming,' was my reply; 'that woman will

always be twenty; what grace, what wit, what seduction!' The daughter of Lord Stafford turned pale, and repulsed my hand. 'What fancy has seized you? Do you imagine I am going to fall in love with Madame de Pompadour?'—'You already love her,' said she to me, in a faltering voice.—'You are always romantic, dear lady. Know that Madame de Pompadour never caused but two passions, first her husband, then the king.'—'What matters it,' she said sadly, 'you are going to the court; all is lost for me—let us speak no more of it.'

"I did not regard this seriously; I even amused myself a little with the trouble of Madame de Crébillon. Shortly after, my servant, much agitated, came to seek me at the royal printing establishment. 'Si-i-r, I do not know how . . . . . Madame de Crébillon . . . . . !'—'Go on, speak!'—'She has gone with her son in a postchaise.'—'Gone!' I flew to the hotel, where they handed me a letter, not a line of which have I forgotten.

"'Farewell! for you have already forgotten me. Happiness is but for a season. Winter has come for me. I go with my son, perhaps he may return to you: but he will return alone. I pardon you on account of the pleasures, so vivid and so pure, that you have given me. Thanks to you, I have realized the dream of my youth. I have been too handsome and too well loved to dare to grow old before you. I prefer leaving you a remembrance worthy our bright days. Life is a romance for poets and lovers: you have been a poet and a lover. Now that you are royal censor, private counsellor of an accidental queen, it is ended. I do not tell you where I

go; you will not follow me; besides, do I know myself? 'ANNA STAFFORD.'

"There it is, word for word, that strange letter. I have preserved it religiously; I have read it a thousand times, although I knew it by heart; but in reading it again I fancied I saw pass before me the pale, sad wife, whom I loved so much.

"Whither had she gone? I flew to England. I saw Lord Stafford, who had neither seen nor expected his daughter. During my stay there, Lord Stafford received a letter from my wife, dated at Paris; she complained, but without explaining, of an acute suffering, but more particularly of the illness of her child. I took the post again, and on returning to Paris endeavored in vain to discover the retreat of Madame Crébillon. Six months after, a friend of Lord Stafford came to inform me that I had lost both my wife and my son. I was never able to ascertain where or how Madame Crébillon died; for the friend of Lord Stafford knew no details; and Lord Stafford having scarcely survived his daughter, there was no one to interrogate. Perhaps, she died at Paris close to me; or, perhaps, in crossing the sea, as she always had a presentiment that she would die at sea.

"What can I tell you more. Crébillon the Gay was thenceforth only Crébillon the Sad. I mourned my wife, the most adored of all my mistresses. You know the rest. I tried, by means of some bad novels, to rise again to the surface; but, alas! Fame is like Fortune; she passes by and waits for you no more. One by one, my friends have all died. Without thinking of retiring from the world, I have per-

ceived, for some years past, that I was like a stranger alone in Paris. There are yet some houses like yours, good old Geoffrin, where I have elbow-room. But what do you wish; I can no longer habituate myself to the new gods which rise up every day. We have but a day; mine has passed. After all, have not M. de Grimm, the Abbé de Voisenon, and others, the right to write my obituary? I am already dead! Sooner or later, what matters it?

"I perceive I have somewhat wearied you with this recital, which, at least, is worth one of my novels. The romance of the heart is sometimes related, but never written. Adieu!"

Kissing the hand of his old friend, Crébillon rose. "Come, Clairon, let us embrace for the last time. Thirty years ago I would have kissed you without asking leave, for in those days you only permitted that which was taken. Gentlemen philosophers, profound thinkers, latitudinarians, look to your works. There is here below a last friend who never abandons us at the last hour, and who always consoles and causes us to love the sombre solitude of the tomb. That friend is God."

"Amen," said Diderot, bowing.

The ancient royal censor departed without another word; an old servant attended him in the antechamber; an old carriage, much dilapidated, was waiting for him in the street.

This singular and unexpected appearance made considerable noise in the literary world. Mademoiselle Clairon spoke of it twenty years after with vivid recollection. In all probability, Crébillon did not

long survive this visit; however, as I have already said, the precise epoch of his death has never been ascertained. He may possibly have gone to England, or may have gone to pass his latter days in the environs of Paris; or he may have desired to see once more the cathedral of Sens. Of what consequence is it? It is not the history of his death we wish to study here.

What shall we say of his novels which no one reads? They are in their witty falsehood the true and living expression of a period abandoned to wit and falsehood. Crébillon had studied in the school of Fontenelle and Marivaux; it is, however, asserted by his friends, that his first tale was written with the idea of parodying the spun-out sentimentality of the day. If such was the case, he only succeeded in parodying himself in the end. His true claim to reputation consists in having created a style; and it is something to have created even a bad style in literature, when there are so many who are but the parrots to those who have preceded them. The manners and passions delineated in the *Sofa* undoubtedly existed only in the society of "*those gentlemen.*" There is there, as in the other novels of Crébillon, more portraits and fancy sketches than scenes from nature; but it is impossible, without injustice, to deny all the grace, all the brilliancy, all the delicacy of the touch of Crébillon. Few novelists have written more truths on the spirit of the world and the character of women. Sterne says, in his letters to Eliza, "Before I attempted to write, I had read Rabelais and Crébillon." Is not this, praise that would be envied by more than one high and power-

ful novelist, of whom no one will speak a hundred years hence.

Moreover, in the time when Crébillon wrote the *Sofa*, nearly all the great wits wrote in almost the same style. Voltaire acknowledged his libertine as well as his philosophical tales. Diderot owned the *Bijoux indiscrets*. The grave President Montesquieu, who did not wish to put his name to the *Persian Letters*, put it to the *Temple de Gnide*. Crébillon was born under the regency, when the French mind wanted that dreamy sentiment, the poetry of the soul and of nature, which raises us above those who have only had wit.

LA MOTTE.

AN INNOVATOR OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

In 1693, there was represented at the theatre of the Comédie-Italienne, for the first time, a piece styled *The Originals*. The author was a young adventurer who was an earnest seeker after all that was new under the sun, even at the expense of common sense. His name was Antoine Houdard de la Motte. He had pursued his studies under the Jesuits at Paris, listening rather to his natural instincts than to his masters; therefore he learned but little Latin and less Greek: he already protested against the Greeks and Romans. To make amends, however, he had been a great dreamer; he had read Corneille with admiration; he had found the ancient poets by no means to his taste; he had vowed to change the world's opinion in this matter. With these fine views in prospect, he determined not to follow those of his family, who wished to make an attorney of him. As in those days there were no journals, the theatre was the only field for the innovator. After having played comedy amid a circle of friends, he made his first appearance as dramatic author, in a strange piece

made up of an odd mixture of Italian and French prose. On the day of representation, he calculated upon a great success. This success was to be the source of his fortune and his glory. With a great reputation once obtained, he could proclaim aloud his ideas upon ancient and modern literature; he would become the leader of a sect, he would contend for his cause with all the might of his mind. He had a thousand other, I can not say how, brilliant dreams of youth. But his success was, like the milk pail of Perrette, who thought she had her fortune in her hands; but the *milk was spilt, good-by to calf, cow, pig, and butter.* The piece was hissed. The innovator was so far from expecting such a result, that it nearly set him crazy. He hurried from the theatre, keeping out of the way of those friends he had invited to celebrate his success: he departed the same evening, repeating La Fontaine's fable. Where did he go? To La Trappe. This was the first time that an author who had been damned, had retired in this way from the world. Not only did he go without stopping, but once arrived in this sombre retreat, he submitted completely to all its austere rules. Many dramatic authors of our day should be condemned to La Trappe.

La Trappe was in those days well peopled. Monsieur de Rancé had made the place quite the fashion. The great betook themselves to this pious retreat without turning their faces toward the storms and pleasures of the world without. The Abbé de Rancé was the chief confessor of all those souls in trouble, who came to enjoy the pleasures of heaven in advance. It was our young solitary's turn. He had

taken the habit, he had sung psalms, his flagellations had left their marks. "My child," said Monsieur de Rancé to him, "you seem very young to take the path of death and eternity."—"What can I do better, father?"—"Listen to the teachings of your heart. Are you sure you have done so? Does your heart never turn to the world from the solemn interests of prayer and retirement?"

The young man reflected. A monastic life was anything but attractive to a heart of only twenty years. What did he find there? The abandonment of glory. But at this thought the hissings at the Comédie-Italienne resounded again in his ears. "My reverend father, I am resolved to die in this pious retreat."—"Think well of it, my son," replied the abbé, who wished by all means to know the cause of his withdrawal from the world; "the regrets which may torment you here, will be a thousand times more dangerous to your soul than any earthly passion. God has not placed us here upon earth to contemplate heaven always; we must submit to the laws of creation. Our Lord extends his blessing to labor, to the joys of the heart, to domestic enjoyment. All are not made to dig their graves here below. There is here and there, a garden or a field where the ear of corn is more acceptable to God than the unfruitful herb of our retreat. Trust me, a man must have a good right to complain of the world before he abandons it for ever. Have you a mother?"—"Alas!" said the young man, "I have a mother, who loves me and weeps for my loss, if I can trust to my dreams."—"Beware, such tears will not mediate for you with God: to love one's mother is to love God.

I want to know what brought you here. Was it faith or sorrow? Was it some mad love . . . . ?"—"God defend me, no, father."

At this place in his confession, the young solitary had turned his face more than once toward the world; that world that he had fled with so much disgust, now appeared, from the walls of La Trappe, to possess a thousand new charms; its women smiled upon him more sweetly than the saints: he saw with his mind's eye a certain orchard at Troyes, where he had plucked peaches with a certain Laura worthy of another Petrarch. "Father," replied he, with a blush, "I will confess to you without more ado why I came to this refuge."—"Speak, my child."—"I came to La Trappe because I was hissed at the Comédie-Italienne."

The handsome but melancholy face of the Abbé de Rancé was lighted up with a smile. "Vanity of vanities!" said he with a sigh, as he thought of his own past life: "these are not the kind of misfortunes that people come to mourn over at La Trappe. Why did you not go to dry your tears upon your mother's bosom? If hereafter the Lord should afflict you with great misfortunes, come hither to this retreat of peace and consolation; but for the present depart—go take your place in the sun."

The young man kissed the hands of the abbé, and immediately left La Trappe never to return. According to the Abbé de Voisenon, he had not lost his time, for he came out with an opera all written. He returned to Paris, without knowing exactly what he was to do. On the day of his arrival, he heard some sacred music by Campra, and an opera of

Lulli's. He went to see Campra. He spoke to him about his musical piece. He told him that a great composer ought sometimes to leave the church for the theatre, and the result, whether good or ill, was that Campra was induced to consent to make his débût together with him. *L'Europe Galante* was prepared in a few weeks; but at the opera one is obliged to wait his turn. *L'Europe Galante* was not represented till 1697. This time the success was triumphant. La Motte entirely forgot La Trappe in the theatre. He wrote in quick succession nine operas, all of which succeeded, thanks to the music of Destouches. He had laid aside for a while his original ideas about literature: but as he was born to be an innovator, he was destined soon to return to those ideas, even without intending it. His first attempt was most unfortunate; he translated Homer, or rather disfigured Homer, with wonderful industry; he allowed himself to remodel Homer, that poem of poems. No creation of human genius under the sun had ever been so profaned. It must be said to the honor of the French understanding, that this singular translation raised a thousand cries against it. La Motte had only the Abbé Trublet on his side. However, before it was published, La Motte had obtained some illustrious opinions in its favor. Boileau himself had predicted, upon hearing the first canto, that old Homer would at last have a becoming French dress. Boileau did not know what he was saying. But I shall return by-and-by to this strange production.

While La Motte was remodelling the Iliad, he wrote several odes, operas, and essays. His first essay was a pamphlet against poetry; it made a

great noise on the Parnassus of 1700. The time was well chosen; the only poet living was Fontenelle. La Motte avows that he is of the opinion of Plato and Pythagoras; Plato who banished poets from his republic; Pythagoras who condemned them to Tartarus. La Motte, like a frigid reasoner, saw in poetry nothing but rhyme. He compares our best poets seriously to jugglers who make a millet-seed pass through the eye of a needle. This was pretty nearly the opinion of Pascal; he fancied that all poetic beauty consisted in certain peculiar phrases, such as *the wonder of our days; the star of night.* La Motte condemns fiction without pity, that beauteous veil of poetry. "Fiction is a vain subterfuge. Why not say precisely to the letter what one wishes to say? Figurative expressions are the snares that are laid to entrap the mind in order to seduce it." In tracing the origin of poetry, he says: "At first it did not differ from the essay except in an arrangement by measure of words that please the ear; fiction with its metaphors was soon introduced. This is all that is essential to poetry." And Fontenelle applauded! La Motte, when he is speaking of poetical enthusiasm, remarks: "It is a fine name given to what is the most unreasonable. Enthusiasm resembles that intoxication that makes a man beside himself, that loses him in a thousand odd images that are barren of result." La Motte, it is seen, belonged to the school of Boileau. In the midst of all these singular ideas, there is, however, occasionally found a page of good sense. Thus in speaking of Ronsard, he ventures to criticise him as a great poet, a worthy son of Pindar, "to such a degree does

all that he borrows of Horace become Pindaresque in his hands. Everywhere in his odes can be found those grand images, that dignity of expression, those metaphors, and that boldness of style that characterize the Theban poet. His is the enthusiasm that inspired Pindar."* La Motte, after having so much decried poetry, took to rhyme. His essay which gave rise to a literary schism, was merely the preface to a collection of Pindaric and Anacreontic odes. It is true that his poetry was the best illustration of his anti-poetic preface: he thus proved his case. However, to believe his ode to Fontenelle, he hopes, thanks to his friend and himself, that the ancients will be surpassed by the moderns.

Away with this servility
  We basely show to ages past,
Homer and Virgil yet may be
  By modern fame eclipsed at last.
Does Nature then to us deny
The power she gave in times gone by
  The Greek and Roman name to grace?
Doats she upon her elder sons,
Only to treat the younger ones
  As outcasts from the human race?

This is speaking with more boldness than poetry; but this boldness attaches you to La Motte, as to an adventurous traveller, who trusts himself to unknown lands; his steps are followed with interest; we are disposed to protest somewhat with him against that

* Since a parallel has been drawn between Pindar and Ronsard, we may as well mention here that their fates were simllar — admired, despised, and again admired.

excessive worship of the Greeks and Romans, that buried the genius of France beneath the dust of the dead.

My haughty muse will never deign
To raise her voice in borrowed strain,
An echo of the bards of old.
Those poets we must all despise,
To whom the god of song denies
A mind original and bold.
Let us the nobler course pursue,
To Pindar and to Horace true.
'T is by inventing that they led;
While the base imitating crowd
No other praise can be allowed,
Than that the others they have read.

La Motte, it is clear, wanted nothing in order to be a true poet but poetry. Perhaps his only fault is not having listened to himself; for while despising his predecessors, he imitated them, he had read them too much. How often it happens that a poet buries his poetry in the leaves of a strange book!

La Motte, continuing his ode, exclaims with reason: "If there is nothing new left, if Nature has been exhausted, then it is not worth the trouble to write."

If all is centred in their works,
What need we to do more than read?

A half century after the *cause célèbre* of the ancients and moderns, Voltaire desired in his turn to dust off the old files. He alone has delivered a judgment in due form, the judgment of the sovereign reason:—

"The great cause between the moderns and an

cients is not yet decided; it was on trial from the silver to the golden age. Men have always pretended that the good old times were much better than the present. Nestor, in the Iliad, in attempting to insinuate himself as a wise conciliator in the mind of Achilles and Agamemnon, commences by telling them: 'I lived formerly among greater men than you are; I have never seen, and will never see again, such great men as Dryas, Ceneus, Exadius, and Polyphemus, equal to the gods. . . .'

"Posterity has fully avenged Achilles, for the poor compliment of Nestor, foolishly praised by those who only praise antiquity. No one knows anything about Dryas; no one has hardly ever heard of Exadius, or Ceneus, and as for Polyphemus, equal to the gods, he has not a very good character, unless having a great eye in the middle of his forehead, and eating men raw, are attributes of divinity.

"Antiquity is full of eulogies upon an antiquity still more remote:—

Men have thought in every age, the age however grand,
That milken streams, an age before, flowed gently thro' the land.

"Horace opposes this prejudice with as much delicacy as force in his beautiful epistle to Augustus: 'Must it be then said of our poems as of our wines, that we prefer always the oldest?'

"Fontenelle expresses himself thus on the subject: 'The whole question of the superiority of the ancients or moderns, reduces itself to a question like this—whether the trees formerly planted were larger than those now. If it were so, then Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes, can not be equalled in modern

times; if not, then we can equal Homer, Plato, and Demosthenes.'

"With the permission of this illustrious academician, that is by no means the whole state of the question. The question is not whether nature can produce in our day as great geniuses, and as great works as those of Greece and Rome, but whether we have as great. It is not impossible certainly that there may be as tall oaks in the forest of Chantilly as there ever were in the forest of Dodona; but suppose that the oaks of Dodona had talked, that certainly would have been an advantage over ours, which probably will never talk."

The odes of La Motte are very numerous; they are of all kinds and character. That which is the most striking in each of them, is the dedication, incense burned in honor of all the contemporary persons of note. It is seen that the poet, since a poet we must call him, has only written the ode for the dedication. Never did a French rhymster, with the exception of Fontenelle, and some others that we do not count, measure out his lines more according to rule. Compared with La Motte, Chapelain has the fire of genius. With La Motte, it is always reason that speaks, merely reason put into rhyme. He is, however, more happy in his Anacreontic odes: he has ease in spite of himself. Take his pretty portraits in pastel for instance; with what graceful ease they are drawn!

A REVIEW OF THE CUPIDS.

See one whose life was almost spent,
His torch extinguished in his hand,

With quiver empty, bow unbent,
Tottering with age could scarcely stand.

And one whose single wing could keep
Him scarce suspended in the air,
Was almost overcome by sleep,
O'erpowered with favors of the fair.

In anger one had snapped his bow,
New sorrows heavy on him lay;
A flirt had caused his tears to flow,
Which with his torch he wiped away.

Another, whose capricious fair
Had chilled the ardor of his love;
New service he to seek elsewhere,
Had spread his wings away to rove.

In his rage to be original, he went so far as to write an ode in prose. Lafaye answered with an ode in verse, in which he defends poetry. What does La Motte do? He puts Lafaye's ode into prose, in order to prove that rhyme and measure are of no advantage to poetry. No one was convinced.

After his odes, he wrote innumerable essays, for competition at the various academies; for some years he obtained all the prizes at Paris and in the provinces. It created a great scandal when it was resolved at a session of the Academy, that La Motte should be requested not to compete any more for the prizes. It must be stated that all his prize essays are very poor essays. It is the cool reason that speaks, like a book we have read. The Academic competition is especially fatal to innovators; they dare not venture anything but mere spectral paradoxes; they reject with fear the fire of inspiration;

they await before they write, that hour, when thought has fatigued its wings, or, if they write during the happy hour of inspiration, they immediately after, blot out with a timid hand all that is fresh and brilliant in what they have written.

La Motte had gone to La Trappe, rather from a presentiment of religion, than from true devotion; he became blind at the age of twenty-four; it seems that then a flash of light shone upon his inward eye; he became a fervent Christian. Since he could no longer see the ways of man, he saw more distinctly the ways of God. Here below he was in the darkness of the tomb, but was he not already within the beaming influence of that sun that never sets? Instead of the twilight, was it not the dawn that opened before him? he penetrated further into the horizon of the past and that of the future. He studied in a more contemplative retirement all the treasures of love that God has buried within the depths of the soul of man; thus he was in the habit of saying, that God had struck him to the earth but to raise him to heaven. He remained blind until his death. As he had inherited from his father sufficient to live the life of a poet, he passed his life happily in the love of letters, and in the love of God. One of his nephews devoted himself to him to the extent of becoming his servant and secretary; his duty was to read to him aloud, or to write from his dictation, to dress him, to accompany him in his walks to the café, or to go with him into society.

As an additional misfortune, the gout, half the time, deprived him of the use of his feet. In spite, however, of this other obstacle, La Motte managed

to dine out almost every day. A carriage or a sedan chair was sent for him, whether he was to dine with the Marchioness de Lambert or with the Duchess du Maine. He was very much sought after in fashionable society, in consequence of his wit, always sharp but always good-natured. The Duchess du Maine used to say that he always hissed with honey on his lips. At the café Procope, there was always a circle ready to listen to this joyous and charming blind poet, who often astonished his listeners with his strange and novel conceptions. He spoke always with artifice; he had so much skill in dazzling his audience, that they always conceded him his point, and were convinced even as regards his odes and tragedies in prose, even as to his criticisms upon the ancients. Both in society, and at the café, he had some distinguished listeners; for example, the Duke of Orleans, Fenelon, the Marquis of St. Aulaire, Madame de Stael, Voltaire, Fontenelle, J. B. Rousseau, Madame Dacier. But the printed words of La Motte never had the same power. He carried on the war alone; no one offered to come to his defence in his bold literary attacks. His writings had at least the glory of arousing the ardor of the libellers. There was not a single one of his essays that was not the cause of the writing of twenty pamphlets; it was the chief excitement of the times.

In 1714, he published his translation of the Iliad, preceded by a long critical essay upon that poem of Homer. What was the object of that criticism and that translation? Without doubt to bring the ancients into disrepute. He reduced the poem to twelve cantos, that is to say he struck out all the

metaphors, all the descriptions, all the pomp of Homer. He was like a draughtsman who wished to copy a production of Titian, fancying that the coloring went for nothing in the picture. The Iliad of La Motte is the sun reflected in water, the ashes of the fire. Madame Dacier entered the lists against this author, who had been guilty of sacrilege upon the prince of poets. She wrote a book entitled, *The Causes of the Corruption of Taste*. This was the scandalous attack of a weak mind. It was a fortunate thing for La Motte, for he answered with his *Reflections on Criticism*, which contrasted strikingly with the violent tirade of his adversary, by its cleverness, grace, and good nature. Madame Dacier had the right on her side, but she defended it with all the coarse bitterness of the disputants of the sixteenth century. Most people would have liked to have been in the wrong, in the way La Motte was. The quarrel extended from one to another, and finally became general; panegyrics and epigrams, in prose and verse, poured down on all sides. All the Academies were engaged in the fight, some for the ancients, some for the moderns. The very shade of Perrault must have been startled. As always happens, all the world was in the right or rather in the wrong. The Academy did not know what side to take when Monsieur de Valincourt tried to make peace; he invited the chiefs of both parties to dinner. All deliberation was cut short, but peace was concluded. Madame de Stael says, in her Memoirs: "I was present at the dinner, I represented the neutrality. The health of Homer was drunk, and everything went off well." Gacon alone remained

in the arena, armed with epigrams and every variety of sonnets, under the title of *Homer avenged.* He had not been invited to the dinner. Observing La Motte's disregard of his satires, he said to him one day, "I am going to write a pamphlet with the title, *An answer to the silence of Monsieur de la Motte!*"

Madame Dacier had said in her book: "Alcibiades gave a good box on the ears to a rhetorician, who had not read the works of Homer; what ought to be done to a rhetorician who should read the Iliad of La Motte?"—"Fortunately," says La Motte, delicately in his answer, "when I read formerly a canto of my Iliad to Madame Dacier, she did not think of this historical incident." Every one was agreed that Madame Dacier had treated her adversary with rudeness, while La Motte did not forget that he was answering a French woman. "It would have been all very well," said D'Alembert, "if La Motte had kept himself to prose in this dispute; he had the misfortune to call to his aid that poetry that he had so much decried, and which, as if out of revenge, deserted him more than ever at the most critical moment. He resembled a skilful but imprudent general, who, while successfully carrying on a war of skirmishes and delays, should wish to add to his successes a pitched battle, and should lose by a defeat all the honor of his campaign."

In his essay on Homer, La Motte gives us an opinion not very well known, and somewhat clever, of Boileau, upon the gods of the Iliad. "I recollect one day, having asked Monsieur Despréaux (Boileau) how he accounted for the oddity and indecency of the gods in Homer; he disdained justifying it

on the score of the gods being mere allegorical personages, and made me the confidant of an idea of his, which although he knew was original with him, he did not wish to make public: it was, that Homer was afraid of wearying by the continued tragic character of his subject; that his human characters having been described only as possessing tragic passions, and as being engaged in deadly combats, he was desirous of enlivening his poem, even at the expense of the gods themselves, and that he had given them comic parts to play, as interludes to the serious nature of the action of his poem."

On the death of Thomas Corneille, La Motte presented himself, at thirty-eight years of age with his odes and his operas, for that seat in the Academy that had been rendered illustrious by Pièrre Corneille. J. B. Rousseau offered himself also. La Motte was elected because he had friends, and J. B. Rousseau was rejected because he had enemies. With the Academy influence has always been more valued than talent. The true poet wrote an epigram by way of consolation; the bad poet delivered an inaugural address that was one of the best that had ever been heard. After having astonished his audience by his originality, he touched their feelings by a few simple and modest words, alluding to Thomas Corneille's blindness. "This reminds me of my own condition; that which age had taken away from my predecessor, I lost in my youth. This conformity in misfortune will often cause me to remind you of him; I shall thus only serve to make you feel his loss the more deeply."

Although he was blind, perhaps, because he was blind, all his friends except Fontenelle wished him

to get married. But he was in regard to women as to poetry, of the phlegmatic Norman school. So, by way of thanking his friends, he wrote some lines on celibacy. I can, I think, without harm to them, give his verses as if they were prose. "They wish me to take a wife! I wish to find in a wife youth and beauty combined, a mind well stored, one with life, of the pleasant, sensible kind; not a jealous but a fond heart; complacent and quite sincere; very lively, but free from art; very wise and not austere; that she may be perfect, indeed, to all the virtues every attraction attach; this is just the kind of wife I need; too happy, however, to meet with such a match."

However, that this man always patient and amiable, would have made a good husband, easy to live with, judge by the following trait. At the theatre one evening, he was struck by a giddy young fellow, because he stepped upon his toe. "My dear sir," said he quietly to him, "you will sincerely regret this: I am blind." This was the first time that La Motte had, worthily, translated that blind old man Homer.

His residence was sad and sombre. It was like entering the cell of a monk. It could be easily seen that a beloved wife had never been there. Some books, disorder, dust, an old broom thrown down, some papers scattered about, a clock without hands, an hour-glass; these were what struck the visiter at first sight. The clock being without hands is thus explained: "Once, once only, the patient La Motte allowed himself to curse his fate: not knowing what to do, he broke off the innocent hands of the clock,

saying that he could no longer see the time pass, but only hear it."

He had but one enemy, J. B. Rousseau. They had commenced as friends, but the Academy proved their apple of discord. It will be remembered that the first celebrated couplets of Rousseau were launched against La Motte. These two poets were chiefs of sects at the café Procope; the party of La Motte was the most numerous, for La Motte was much the best talker. Rousseau, the better poet of the two, foreseeing that La Motte would beat him at the Academy, could not resist the bitter pleasure of the epigram. He wrote some lines against his competitor to a famous opera air. These lines proved the source of his unhappiness, his misery and his exile, for they were followed by others unworthy of him, which he disavowed to the day of his death, but which were the weapons that wounded his honor and his glory.

La Motte in losing his sight had gained a wonderful memory. Not having his attention disturbed by what was to be seen, he acquired the art of retaining, word for word, all that he heard about literature. A young poet one day read to him, in the company of some literary friends, a tragedy; in those days they read hardly anything else but tragedies. La Motte listened in silence to the very end of the last scene. "Your tragedy is beautiful; I will answer for its success. There is one thing only that I have to regret, that is that you have indulged in plagiarism. I would refer you, in proof of what I say, to the second scene of the fourth act." The young poet, quite overcome by such a charge, not knowing

how to justify himself, when La Motte added, "I do not advance what I can not prove, and to show you, I will recite to you this same scene which I learned by heart long since, and of which I do not forget a line." All those who were present looked at each other with astonishment; he recited the whole scene without the least hesitation. The author was completely embarrassed. After La Motte had his laugh at the young poet's embarrassment, he said to him: "Do not disturb yourself, my dear sir, the scene is yours as well as all the rest; but it appeared so beautiful to me, and so affecting, that I could not help recollecting it."

As La Motte wished to be a universal genius, he wrote some fables that Fontenelle pronounced more agreeable than those of La Fontaine. I am not altogether of the opinion of that great critic; however, I grant that those fables have been too much despised. Some of them are quite ingenious; but that which is the most creditable to La Motte is that he invented all his apologues. It is quite a pity that they are so labored in style. That which is the most remarkable and attractive about them, is their moral influence; that is the point to which he hurries, without stopping, for the humorous and the picturesque. One evening Voltaire was at the Temple, where, on the evening before, they had slandered La Motte. "Gentlemen," said he, with a very mysterious manner, "a forgotten fable of La Fontaine has been discovered." He read *The Pelican and the Spider*, and every one was delighted; each one tried who could best discover its apparent or hidden beauties. When they were tired of admiring, Voltaire, who be-

fore had been silent, thus spoke: "Well, gentlemen, this fable is by La Motte." At the Academy, a parallel was drawn between La Motte as a writer of fables and La Fontaine. "The former has greater simplicity, the latter the greater ingenuity." The discussion might have continued until this day, had not a philosopher thought of submitting the question to a child; this child, six years old, was set to learn, in a single day, a fable of La Fontaine and a fable of La Motte. He learned La Fontaine's in less than an hour, and he could not learn La Motte's at all.

Would you believe it? this man, so calm and philosophical, without smiles and without tears; this man, without fire and enthusiasm; this man that nothing affected but reason, produced a tragedy that made all Paris and the provinces weep, even the regent, who hardly believed in tragedy. *Inés de Castro* met with the same success as the *Cid*. During its representations, the spectators held copies of it with pen in hand, and with their ears all alive. Never, according to D'Alembert and Duclos, was a tragedy so much praised and so much attacked. All the journalists of the time wrote either for or against it, in prose and verse; but without producing much effect upon him with all their scribbling:—

"All Paris, for *Inés*, had the eyes of Don Pedro."

This success, which astonishes us, us especially the poets of the nineteenth century, was the result of that *tragic pity* of the ancients which goes straight to the heart without exciting the nerves by that pity made up of horrors, of the moderns. In *Inés de Castro* the grief is great, but amiable, human; tears flow,

but the scene never makes us turn away our eyes. How happens it that so phlegmatic and dry an intellect has succeeded in so beautiful and simple a creation? The Abbé de la Porte, in his *Dramatic Anecdotes*, relates that La Motte, wishing to succeed by all means in drawing tears, collected together all those passionate emotions that had ever been known to succeed on the stage; that he afterward begged of his friends to seek for him in history, some event in which his idea might be displayed; that the learned only found *Inés de Castro*, and that was the only reason he gave this title to his tragedy. As singular as this account appears, it accords wonderfully with the character of the poet, who was for having a tenth muse upon Parnassus, the muse of mathematics. This other story of the Abbé de la Porte is more reliable. La Motte had witnessed at the *Palais de Justice* a very dramatic incident. A son had married without the consent of his father. At the end of some years, the father, having heard of the marriage, demanded of the court its dissolution. The son's advocate, when his turn came to speak, exhibited the children, the offspring of the marriage, which he had concealed near him: "There is all I have to say," exclaimed he, with an expression of true pity. Never was an advocate so eloquent. La Motte, overcome even to tears, remembered this incident in his tragedy. He introduced the children of *Inés;* it was a bold novelty. A few days before its representation, the regent being present at a reading of the piece, had said to the poet: "Take care, La Motte, children have never before been introduced on the stage."—"Then there is still something

new under the sun," La Motte answered, with some pride. At the representation, the pit did not know exactly how to take the appearance of the children; some were for laughing, others did not know how to hide their tears; finally a laugh resounded in the theatre. Mademoiselle Duclos, who was playing the part of *Inés*, stopped and exclaimed indignantly, "Laugh away, fools as you are, at the finest part of the play!" and she continued her part. Tears flowed in earnest; the regent, seeing La Motte, said to him: "La Motte, you were right."

The success of this tragedy is at the present day an anomaly, for the style is the work. More than one good line can hardly be found in *Inés*, and that line is Corneille's. A tragedy without style is a monument without architecture. La Motte was only an architect of reason. Of all the criticisms, this saying of a distinguished woman must not be forgotten: "Monsieur de la Motte has, like Monsieur Jourdan in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, written prose without knowing it." The saying of Voltaire will be recollected, which is to the same purpose. La Motte was declaiming one day in the presence of Voltaire against tragedies in verse; it was a short time after the appearance of this poet's *Œdipus:* "Your tragedy is beautiful," said La Motte; "I must put it into prose."—"Do so," replied Voltaire, "and I will put your *Inés* into verse."

Inés is a masterpiece of dramatic construction; love has never been more miserable, the pride of rank has never been more successfully vanquished by nature; the whole interest is derived from these two sentiments, eternal sources of tragic pity. The

effect is never in what is said, but in the situation; thus, in reading, *Inés* loses all its charm, and all its power. La Motte, who was only a man of talent, could never clear the barrier of genius. Intellect and reason stop, pale and chilled, before this barrier; in order to clear it, one must have the fire and spirit of a young horse, that can take the bit in his teeth at the proper moment.*

La Motte died in the midst of his fame, not foreseeing that glory would so soon abandon his shade. He died from an attack of gout, in his sixtieth year. His last hour was like his whole life, devoutly Christian. Toward the end of his days, he had versified some psalms, always to the disadvantage of poetry.

In the *French Parnassus*, La Motte is engraved in profile, with Destouches, his musical composer. His physiognomy is anything but agreeable. He has upon his head, as in all his portraits, a turban, or rather a rag. He was the only poet of his day who disdained the wig. His dress is of a novel kind; it is a kind of Greek drapery, without meaning. The medallion consecrated to his glory, represents a Cupid with a trumpet and a lute, hovering above a tomb, where the angry serpents of envy are hissing; and surmounting the work, there is the following line:—

"Death assures my triumph."

* Besides criticisms, there were four travesties played with success. The tragedy had touched the feelings to such an extent that more than once the spectators were seen to weep on seeing these travesties, being reminded of the real piece. La Motte laughed at the critics, saying: "What matters their tirades? they wept." A man, paid to hiss at La Motte, was so overcome at one of the representations of *Inés*, that he turned toward a companion, wiping his eyes, and said: "My friend, hiss for me, I have n't the strength."

It can be truly said that this is a line without rhyme or reason. I do not know of any rhyme in *umph;* and death so far from establishing the empire of La Motte, destroyed, with the same stroke, the man and his work.

La Motte has only left behind him the memory of his fine talents. He was almost a universal genius, for he had no especial vocation for anything in particular. Talent is a great thing; it saves one from false steps, it gives an agreeable tone to feebleness, it dazzles the eyes at a time when there is nothing to address to the heart and the thoughts; but talent passes away, like a fashion. During a man's life, he can regulate his talent according to the varied tastes of his age; but as soon as he is dead, his work remains buried like so many rags in confusion in the corner of an old trunk. In turning over the works of this transient writer, we seem to find the costumes of a past fashion, the cut of which does not suit any one. Great geniuses are dressed with so much art, and so much richness, that they are always in fashion.

La Motte had boldness and rashness, he despised prejudice; he knew how to go out of the beaten paths; in fine, there is but one thing wanting to give him a place in the sun of glory—genius. What is remarkable, La Motte had less originality in trying to be original by system, than most of the writers of his day, who made no such attempt. It is much better to follow one's fancy than to try and master it. In poetry, especially, chance is often more fortunate than reason.

With a good search, and without alluding to Jean-Jacques, we might succeed in finding some other in-

novators of the eighteenth century: Piron, who before La Chaussée, attempted to make people both laugh and cry at the same time in the theatre; the Abbé Prévost, who was the originator of the French romance; Diderot, who might have invented Sterne; Voltaire, who had invented the prose fable, as La Fontaine had invented the poetical; André Chénier, who clothed poetry in the flowing peplum of the Greeks; Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who was a landscape-painter, in love with nature. But I love to think that these poets and romance-writers, have enlarged the domain of art without design. Once again, chance is a great master. Would it not be better, however, to say inspiration?

BUFFON.

The philosophy of the eighteenth century was the offspring of the Renaissance. What the latter had done for art the former did for the science of mind. The same movement that had led on Michael Angelo, at a later day, brought thinkers themselves to the study of Nature. The sixteenth century, great as it was, looked only at the beauties of Nature through the veil of pagan antiquity. Besides, the prevailing religious opinions of the age deterred men from the investigation of the mysteries of the material world. The church, which has always condemned the stage, had put its interdict upon the grand theatre of the Creator himself. It was necessary that there should be a complete revolution in opinion, before mankind would venture upon the contemplation of the magnificence of Nature. Philosophy brought about this change; the observation of facts and the triumph of reason followed. The barrier which kept back the human mind upon the threshold of the temple of Nature, was thrown down. Two men appeared at the same time; two men, one of whom alone would

have sufficed to give renown to the memorable era which gave them birth — Buffon and Linnæus.

These two great naturalists had nothing in common but genius. Providence that had given them birth in the same year, within four months of each other, was pleased to separate them otherwise by a great number of contrasts. Linnæus first saw the light in an humble Swedish cottage, Buffon in a French chateau. Forced to enter a shoemaker's shop for a living, Linnæus learned to think in hammering leather. Buffon, surrounded by all the enticements of luxury, had little reason to bring the force of his will to bear but in resisting fortune. The bent of their faculties was hardly more alike. The two showed in their scientific character traces of the influence of their early life. Linnæus was pre-eminently the workman, and Buffon the artist of Nature.

George Louis Leclerc de Buffon was born the 7th of September, 1707, at Montbar, in Burgundy, the land that had shown its fertility in giving birth to St. Bernard and Bossuet. Buffon's father was the parliamentary counsellor of his district. He gave his children a solid education, and left to them the choice of a profession. On leaving college the youthful Buffon made the acquaintance by chance — what is chance after all? — of an Englishman of his own age, the youthful Duke of Kingston. Like two birds that had escaped from their cage, they gayly commenced their wanderings. Behold the two with the wide world before them, travelling whither they pleased, at a period of life when the heart feels, and the eyes are wide open to, the beauties of earth and sky. When France was travelled over, then Italy

was before them. They had an eye for Nature everywhere. Buffon, at a later day, made use of the pictures that these travels had painted on his memory; one of his peculiar qualities as a naturalist was his power of natural description.

The hearts of our two young pilgrims were occasionally caught, doubtless, by the brambles of irresistible passion. A glance here, a smile from a row of pearly teeth and a pair of rosy lips, or there a well-developed bust. These are more than enough to trip up the virtue of a youth of eighteen. Buffon fell in love by hazard: his only experience of such fiery passions was by the way; he called them the abuses of the soul. He had no faith in the heart, he had a habit of saying that the moving principle of love was vanity. It is well known that the greatest skeptics in love, like those in religion, are the most inconsistent of men. They worship almost all they blaspheme against. It is true Buffon had at that time a mistress that held the first place in his affections: this mistress was glory.

The love of renown and of public distinction was the ruling principle in the character of Buffon. He was grave even in his gallantries. His *billets-doux* had the air of letters addressed to posterity. "Buffon," remarked Madame Necker, "could not write upon trifling subjects. When he attempted to clothe small objects with his magnificent robe, it fell in great folds all about."

Who would believe that so original a mind made its first essay in translations. After a residence of some months in England, he published, on his return to France, Haller's work on Plants and Newton's

Fluxions. These translations, and his original prefaces, first gave him a knowledge of his power as a writer. Henceforward Buffon continued these researches. He wrote in succession several memoirs on geometry, physics, and rural economy. He was then twenty-six years of age; twenty-six is the infancy of genius, yet old men, who had grown gray with study, regarded him as their brother.

The construction of a mirror, after that of Archimedes of old, of all the labors of Buffon at this early period, disclosed most clearly the secret of his inquiring mind. The sun was the point of view of our young observer. What did this bold son of earth wish to attempt face to face with this giant of the universe? Buffon undertakes to demonstrate the primitive source of the omnipotent force which centres in the sun, and in order to arrive at this result, he proposes to burn substances at great distances by concentrating upon them the consuming fires of this great planet. The ancients believed that the young eagle practised its eye in gazing on the sun from the borders of its nest. The genius of Buffon had not yet spread its wings to their full extent, when he had already looked with the eye of science upon the great source of light.

As yet the great naturalist had only, so to speak, tacked about in the vast ocean of science, his sail sought the direction of the wind in order to point his course. An accidental circumstance fixed the resolution of this thoughtful voyager. Dufaï, a man of education, a young officer high at court, was then the chief manager of the Garden of Plants. He was on the eve of death before his prime. In whose

hands was the management of this establishment so long neglected, and only just now beginning to emerge from its sad state of confusion, to pass? Hellot, the chemist, hurried to the bed-side of the sick man, and said to him: "Buffon is the only man who has the force of mind to continue your work of reform. Restrain all feeling of rivalry, and recommend this friend of mine for your successor. This request is stated in the letter I now present. Sign." Hellot was insinuating and firm; Dufai signed it with his dying hand. Maurepas, the minister, accepted the proposition that was presented to him in this insidious manner. It was an act of favor, for Buffon had never made natural history a study. This, however, is not the first time that favor though blind made a happy hit. Bonaparte was also made a general through intrigue, and at the outset of his career was thought by his comrades an officer of fortune.

Everything was to be done. Buffon trusted to his star, and soon, so to speak, a new history emerged from the darkness that covered all Nature. Until the eighteenth century the field of science was dry and barren. Pliny had written a romance of Nature. The philosophers, or rather the learned men of the middle ages, had followed in the tracks of antiquity with a servile step. While doing justice to his predecessors, Buffon opened a new road which was that of observation and experiment. Convinced that the works of the human mind could only resist time by means of a good style, he applied the art of writing to the natural sciences. The chief characteristic of Buffon's style is its grandeur. Buffon's style wants, perhaps, flexibility and variety; it would

be more pleasing to meet with occasional marks of simplicity, but he is grand on grand subjects; and when he rises, it is clear that it is upon wings. The word colorist was unknown in the language of Racine and Bossuet; it was created expressly for the painter of Nature.

Buffon married Mademoiselle de Saint-Bélin, in 1762: "She was a charming woman," says Hérault de Séchelles, "whom he selected at the age of fifty-five years, from inclination." It is clear that science no more than glory was not his only passion. He looked at Mademoiselle de Saint-Bélin with the eye of a naturalist. Buffon was then investigating the physiology of man and woman: philosophers, like the artists, require a model. "Mademoiselle de Saint-Bélin," says the Cardinal de Bernis, "was an animated rose." Alas! roses bloom but for a moment. "Madame de Buffon," says the poet Lebrun, "died in the flower of her age." — "She had beauty combined with all the graces of intellect."

Buffon, according to a letter of the Chevalier Jaucourt, who was his secretary, had a peculiar way of his own of understanding love. His heart was never at stake. When he felt the thirst for sensual love upon his lips, he sent for a peasant-girl of Montbar to decipher with him in his cabinet, a mysterious chapter of natural history. There were at Montbar a dozen peasant-girls or more, that aided him in these studies.

Buffon was an exception to the men of his day. His life was laborious and nobly tranquil. He was on good terms with the leaders of the philosophical movement. This dignified reserve was only once

transgressed, and then Buffon was not to blame. Voltaire charged Buffon's style with being too pompous and stilted. The following line, which he discharged like an arrow at the author of *The Theory of the Earth*, is well known :—

You talk of physics in bombastic style.

One day when the "*Natural History*," was quoted in the presence of Voltaire, "Not so natural," he replied. Voltaire, with his hatred of the deluge, allowed himself to contradict the opinion of Buffon in regard to the shells found upon the surface of the earth, which, according to the naturalist, had been deposited there by the sea. In Voltaire's opinion, the pilgrims in the time of the Crusades, had brought these shells to France from Syria. It took a naturalist like Buffon to mistake this joke for serious. At first he got angry, and then afterward acknowledged that he was wrong in so doing. This little quarrel was soon settled ; each of the two opponents settled it in his peculiar way : Voltaire by a stroke, "I do not wish to remain at sword's point with M. de Buffon for a cockle-shell ;" and Buffon by an elegant phrase, "It may be thought, as I think myself, that I have not treated M. de Voltaire with sufficient seriousness. I acknowledge that it would have been better not to have uttered this opinion at all, than to have uttered it with a joke. I declare so much for M. de Voltaire, myself, and *posterity*." This interchange of courtesies did not stop here. Buffon presented Voltaire with a copy of his works ; Voltaire wrote him a letter of thanks, in which he spoke of Archimedes the first, as the predecessor of Buffon.

Buffon in reply remarked that a second Voltaire would never be spoken of. Buffon put on his best ruffles when he wrote to women. Here is a letter of his to Madame de Genlis:—

"I am no longer a lover of Nature. I forsake Nature for you, my dear madame, who do more and deserve more. Nature only knows how to create bodies, you create souls. Would that mine had been of this happy creation! I would then have what I now want to make myself agreeable, and you would enjoy my infidelity with pleasure. Pardon me, madame, for this moment of delirium and of love. I will now write rationally."

Buffon's conversation was by no means so stilted as his written style. His society was much sought after in the world, where his acquaintances of a class by themselves, enthroned him as king. "The conversation of Buffon," says Madame Necker, "has a peculiar interest. He has busied himself his whole life with ideas unknown to most men, and, therefore, his talk has always the piquancy of novelty." His beautiful and dignified face gave increased dignity to what he said. Buffon was not always equally happy, when he left the domain of science for that of literature. La Motte, Fontenelle, Marivaux, had made it the fashion to declaim against poetry. No one went further in this rage than the author of the Epochs of Nature. Speaking of some beautiful verses, he remarked, that "they were as beautiful as beautiful prose."—"I heard, in 1780," says Laharpe, "the respectable and venerable Buffon, sustain very positively, that the most beautiful verses were full of faults, and did not approach the perfec-

tion of good prose." Would the fable of the fox that lost his tail be applicable even to great minds? D'Alembert was still more of a geometer than Buffon was a prose-writer. One day he said to Rivarol: "Don't talk to me about your Buffon, that Marquis of Tuffière, who, instead of simply writing the word horse, says, "The most beautiful conquest that man has ever made, is that of this noble and spirited animal."—"Yes," replied Rivarol, joking, "it is like that fool Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, who has taken it into his head to write:—

> From sacred precincts whence Aurora springs,
> To where the sun in setting gilds the earth.

instead of saying "from east to west."

Since Buffon, Rivarol, and D'Alembert, time has done justice to the periphrasis, but the poetry remains.

Buffon seldom quitted the Garden of Plants, where he reigned an absolute sovereign, except to go occasionally during the summer to his beautiful residence at Montbar. He was my lord in everything, in his style of writing, in society and private life. It is well known that he never worked but in full dress and ruffles. Might it not be said that he wished to elevate himself above the plants, whose laws he was investigating? Dressed as we have described him, he was in the habit of retiring to a pavilion in a remote corner of his garden, where he was not visible to any one. When not at work, he retained his taste for display. He always carried his head high when he walked. On Sunday he was to be seen going to church, in company with a Capuchin friar, who

performed the double duty of confessor and steward. Pompously enthroned upon his manorial seat, he received with manifest pleasure the honors due to his rank. During the week, his usual walks were in the fields, where the rural population of his neighborhood were at work. As he walked, he was in the habit of addressing in terms of gallantry the women and young girls that he met with the sickle in their hands, or the sheaves under their arms.

He had a large fortune that he spent nobly. The expenses of the Garden of Plants exhausted all his means, and he was forced to borrow. The old building was too small to contain all the wealth of the three kingdoms of Nature that the great name of Buffon had attracted from all parts of the world to the Garden of Plants. At each addition to his *Cabinet of Natural History*, Buffon gave up an apartment in his house. At one time it was his library, at another his parlor, and again his bed-room, so that at last he found himself put out of doors by himself. Buffon found it necessary to get possession of a hotel in his neighborhood. It was necessary that Alexander should conquer Asia in order that Aristotle might collect together the works of nature. Buffon had alone need of his glory, for the composition of a much greater herbal.

Buffon personally was the soul of the Garden of Plants. Daubenton used to remark, "Without Buffon, I would not have passed fifty years of happiness in that garden." These two philosophers were true lovers of Nature. Buffon, however, looked at Nature with the eye of a philosopher, a writer, and a poet, and Daubenton as a classifier. Buffon was

short-sighted. It was especially with his mind's eye that he saw. The eyes appeared to him as instruments too purely gross and mechanical wherewith to investigate truth. Physical analysis he never had any confidence in. A philosopher once spoke to him of an experiment he was about trying with a diamond: "I will burn it in a golden crucible," he said.—"The best crucible is the mind," replied Buffon. It was in submitting Nature to this crucible that he was enabled to deduce the general laws of existence.

Like Descartes, the robust thinker, who while by the doctrine of free inquiry, he shook to its foundations, the entire edifice of catholicism, was devoutly worshipping the virgin Mary, Buffon was always a model of submission to the requirements of his religion. When in the country, even during week-days, he assiduously performed his religious duties. Of all things he most feared the censures of his church. Having heard that his opinions upon the formation of the earth, had given concern to the grave doctors of the Sorbonne, he quickly disavowed any consequence that infidelity might draw from any of his works; he even attempted to reconcile his hypothesis with the account of creation in the book of Genesis. This Christian-like proceeding entirely disarmed the Sorbonne: it withdrew its hand that was already armed with thunderbolts, ready to dash them upon the doomed head of the philosopher. On this account there have been doubts raised as to the sincerity of Buffon. Perhaps the author of the *Theory of the Earth* recollected the fate of Galileo.

Buffon was nearly fifty when he was elected mem-

ber of the French Academy. Grimm thus describes his inaugural address: "Buffon did not confine himself to reminding us that the Chancellor Seguier was a great man, that Cardinal Richelieu was a very great man, that Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were also very great men; that the Archbishop of Sens was also a great man, and that, finally, the whole forty were great men; this distinguished man, disdaining the ordinary nauseous and tiresome eulogies, deemed it more appropriate to treat of a subject worthy of his pen and the Academy; his subject was 'Style,' and it was said that the Academy had taken a teacher of belles-lettres." He followed nature as his model: "Why," asks Buffon, "are the works of Nature always so perfect? Because each work is always a whole, and her design is constant and eternal; she prepares in silence the germs of all her productions; she sketches out by a single touch, the primitive form of each existence; she develops it, she perfects it by a constant action and in a fixed time. The result astonishes; but it is the impress of divinity which should strike our minds."

The author of the *Natural History* was king at Montbar, but he was a king without subjects. This country in fact is the very image of solitude. The court of Archimedes II. consisted but of a few travellers; among these may be mentioned Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Herault de Séchelles. Jean-Jacques fell upon his knees and kissed the threshold of the door. Rousseau was just the man to admire Buffon; great writers are members of the same family. Herault de Séchelles, then a young magistrate belonging to the parliament of Paris, paid a visit to Buffon

in his retreat at Montbar, in that sanctuary of science, that cradle of natural history, as Prince Henry remarked. With a coarse freedom, he tore aside the veil of hospitality, and exposed to the eyes of an inquisitive public the mysteries of the fireside, the innermost thoughts of the man and the philosopher. It was to him that Buffon addressed the following compromising remark: "I have always written God, but all that is to be done, is to substitute for this word, the power of nature." God alone knows Buffon's opinion of his nature; but we can not see how one word substituted for another can possibly change the belief of mankind.

Buffon was particularly fond of Montbar, for there he could labor in entire freedom; listen to Vicq-d'Azyr: "There arises at Montbar, in the middle of an ornamental garden, an ancient tower; it was there that Buffon wrote his history of nature; it was thence that his fame spread over the whole world. He went there at the rising of the sun. The morning tints, the early song of birds, the varied aspect of the landscape, everything which impressed the senses, reminded him of his model. Wandering in the walks, he hurried, he lingered, he stopped, sometimes with his head raised to heaven as if inspired, at others, bent in contemplation, as if about to create. He wrote, he erased, he declaimed." Vicq-d'Azyr does not tell us that the first person that Buffon met was his valet, carrying a pair of curling-tongs and a box of hair-powder.

II.

Buffon's style has been complained of as too pompous and grandiloquent; his thoughts, like his person, required to be set off with ornaments. This uniform elevation of style is sometimes monotonous; a little negligence and simplicity occasionally would be more to our taste. This fault is particularly noticeable in Buffon's addresses to the Academy, when he did not wish to transgress the usual rule of saying a great deal about nothing at all. Style ought to take an example from those women who, satisfied with what beauty has done for them, despise artificial ornaments. Buffon wrote to the Abbé Bexon, "Paint well your beautiful swan." In nature swans are never painted; notwithstanding, they are not the less white and agreeable for all that.

There is nothing that so heightens a natural grace as that air of nonchalance that belongs to it. Coquetry is never more enticing than at twilight. The muse of style is like Virgil's shepherdesses; she tosses at us the apple and escapes behind the willows, content with having given us just a glimpse:—

> To the willows she like Galatea glides,
> Her flowing hair her lovely shoulders hides.

Among great writers, Buffon is one that we admire but do not love. "The style is the man," is one of Buffon's own remarks, and I regret it; for what the great naturalist especially wants, is feeling. When in describing the building of a bird's nest, he calls it a labor of love, I do not hear the fluttering of the wings or of the heart of the mother. When enumera-

ting dogs of all kinds, of all occupations, so to speak; his shepherd's dog interests me, but the blind man's dog is forgotten. Chateaubriand remarks that, if Buffon had been a Christian, he would have shown more feeling. I do not know that; he was wanting in simplicity of heart, and simplicity of heart is natural religion. At a reading of *Paul and Virginia*, at Madame Necker's, Buffon put the author out of countenance by his yawning. As Bernardin de St. Pierre continued to read, the naturalist ordered his carriage in a loud voice, to avoid listening to *such nonsense.* Buffon could not appreciate the adorable freshness of the loves of those dawning stars. On that occasion, a clever woman remarked of St. Pièrre's work that, "If a folly, it is a folly that will be at any rate immortal."

Buffon, like Montesquieu, was an author, *en grand seigneur*, who passed through life and its passions without having his heart touched. He founded the dignified in style: Lebrun, the artist, was not more majestic. This ambitious dignity can be pardoned Buffon, on the score of the thoughts it clothes. Montesquieu, in writing his *Spirit of the Laws*, looked for clearness, reason, vigor. Buffon, in his *Natural History*, rose to the height of poetry; in fact, like Jean-Jacques Rousseau as he looked upon the wonders of nature, he felt himself to be a poet. What a glorious time for French poetry, when Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques, Buffon, and Diderot, reigned supreme! All the genius of our language is found in the style of these five writers. It is the gamut of the passions, of sentiment, and of thought.

Buffon was not an artist after the manner of

painters and sculptors; but he understood beauty, if not that of art, at least that of nature. He has somewhere said: "The ancients have made such beautiful statues, that, by common agreement, they are the most exact representation of the human body in its perfection. These statues are not mere copies of the human body, for they were not modelled from any single person, but from all mankind." Is not this a striking homage to art, on the part of the eloquent author of the *Natural History?* God has diffused beauty, and art has combined it. This was after all an eloquent translation of Plato's dream.

Though retired from the world, he enjoyed his share in the gossip and scandal of his day. "You have heard," no doubt he writes to the Abbé Bexon, "that Voltaire has those plays of his, which have been rejected by the theatres, acted at his own house. This only proves that the managers were right." The judgment of Buffon was not charitable to an excess. "M. Marivaux," he wrote to Bexon, "has published a little work, which makes the second volume of his life of Marianne. Little minds and the fops of literature will admire his thoughts and style." Buffon was difficult to please. He was asked one day, how many great men there were? "Five," he replied; "Newton, Bacon, Leibnitz, Montesquieu, and I."

The lofty opinion that Buffon had of himself, was justified by the esteem of his cotemporaries. "Voltaire, it is true," says Laharpe, "made more of a noise in the world than he did; he was more dreaded and more sought after, as the voice of the opinion of the day; but Buffon was more respected, because

free from this dread; his reputation was undisturbed by any personal considerations. At Paris he kept up relations with the highest society; he even corresponded with crowned heads. The greatness of his fame impressed Frederick the Great and the Empress Catherine, who were untiring in their efforts to induce him to establish himself in their kingdoms. Buffon sent to the empress a part of himself—his bust by Houdon. "Seventy-four years graven on this marble will only serve to render it colder," he wrote to her majesty. He was a fine-looking old man; his features, his person, his walk, his great age, the only signs of which were his gray hairs, everything about him was noble and commanding. His genius shone from his face.*

Of all the honors that were bestowed upon Buffon in his old age, none flattered his just pride so much as the erection of his statue in that garden of plants, which he had adorned by his generosity and his genius. Moreover, this statue was a concession from that envy which always attacks great men. This homage was intended to appease the anger of the prince of naturalists, in consequence of some talk about a successor. The statue arose; but a low jealousy concealed itself in the choice of the epigraph, as an asp lies hid among flowers. Some one wrote upon the statue, no doubt with a malicious design: *naturam complectitur omnem.* On the following day, a mischievous young wag, no doubt the mere agent of some odious rivals, wrote beneath these words the following malicious comment: *He who embraces*

* Louis XV. even shared with the other kings in their esteem for Buffon. Louis XV. conferred upon him the title of count.

much, grasps little. Buffon stormed; the equivocal epigraph was erased, and the following was substituted: *majestati naturæ par ingenium.*

The delight that Buffon felt in consequence of this public homage amounted almost to intoxication. About the same time his son erected another monument at Montbar, of more humble pretensions. Near the tower which was of great height, a column was raised with the following inscription:—

Excelsæ turri, humilis columna,
Parenti suo, filius Buffon, 1785.

Though Buffon was not fond of poetry, he was a considerable admirer of that addressed to himself. "Everybody who has heard me read the beautiful ode of M. Lebrun," he wrote to the Abbé Bexon, "concurs in admiring it." This ode was a tribute to the naturalist.

Buffon availed himself of assistance in his labors. Daubenton, Gueneau de Montbelliard, and the Abbé Bexon, aided him. From this we learn that the idea of literary aid is not peculiar to our day. He himself, however, worked hard. "I was in the habit of spending," he said to Herault de Séchelles, "twelve or fourteen hours in study, in this consisted all my pleasure. In truth, I devoted myself more to this than to thoughts of glory. Glory may come after, if it will, and it does always come." It had already come for the author of the *Epochs of Nature.*

Buffon died at Paris, the 7th of April, 1788, at the age of eighty-one. Nature was widowed. "One thing is certain," says Laharpe, "that he received the last sacraments of the church, which, by a scan-

dal that had become a sort of fashion, most French philosophers thought it a duty to refuse." Buffon observed the proprieties to the last.

Buffon died in the year preceding the revolution. His son was startled at the sight of the deluge of blood which began to flow upon the tomb of his father. This celebrated naturalist, who had written the history of the ancient deluge, did not foresee such a deluge as that.

Buffon's son had been something of a traveller. The empress of Russia had received him with distinction in her kingdom. All the crowned heads expressed to him the desire of attaching him to their service. The revolution accused him of no other crime than being the son of his father. It was the aristocratic title of the Count de Buffon, that drew upon him the vengeance of '93. Dragged to execution, this young man, pale and trembling, could hardly understand the mystery of this bloody farce. Subdued and bent, like a reed, he inclined and raised his head alternately before the torrent of the mob that rushed against him. When he had mounted the fatal plank, when the executioner bound his hands in earnest, he trembled, he tottered, and turned toward the crowd:—

"Fellow-citizens, I am the son of Buffon!"

The people were silent. "What is that to me," said the executioner; "it would be all the same if you were the pope's son?"—"I am the son of Buffon, the author of the *Natural History*," proudly reiterated the victim.—"I do not know how to read," muttered the executioner.—"Of what crime am I guilty?" asked the poor young man, with a con-

science void of offence.—"If it was not you, it was your father, then! You have besides the head of an aristocrat."

These fellows of the guillotine know men only by their heads.

There was nothing more to be said. Buffon's son wrapped himself in the glory of his father, and in this sacred robe received the fatal blow.

The son, the tomb, the statue, and the inheritance of Buffon, the revolution swallowed up all. At the moment that the heir of an immortal name fell under the brutal stroke of the guillotine, the people were showering public honors upon a foreign naturalist. The bust of Linnæus, the cobbler's apprentice, was placed in the Garden of Plants, under the shade of the cedar of Libanus. Women, children, old men, paid their worship to him in this new temple of nature. Beneath this appearance of homage to the Swedish philosopher, lurked a hatred of the French naturalist; the glory of the child of the people was exalted in order to humble the memory of the man of noble birth. The clouds that gathered over the memory of Buffon cleared away with the passing of the tempest of the French revolution.

The author of the *Natural History* had always but little regard for classifications. It was always his opinion, that they required a great deal of labor that was barren of result, at the expense of higher qualities. It has been supposed that the rivalry between him and Linnæus was owing to his uncompromising opposition to what now is termed *system* in natural history. We think it was rather owing to the peculiar bent of his mind. Buffon dealt with

masses. His bold vision embraced in its glance great general truths; his mind required great space to think in. He did not believe in measuring nature with a yard-stick. To take account of the stock of the riches of the globe, to ticket them and arrange them in order was quite a secondary affair; that he left to the classifiers. The learned men who drew up these inventories were, in his opinion, mere clerks of science. Cuvier without doubt did much toward perfecting the systems which existed before his day, but it must be allowed in honor of Buffon that naturalists acknowledge the incompleteness of these labors. All classification is more or less artificial; that is to say, the order in which organic beings are classified, express but imperfectly the natural relations of the different members of the animal kingdom. The system, which is spoken so much of now-a-days, is a sort of philosopher's stone, which is always in a state of solution in the crucible of the alchemists of nature, and so remains.

Buffon was not a man of detail. Not only did he engage others to write for his *History of Birds*, but he complained in his letters of the obligation he was under to "write about feathers." Besides he complains of those melancholy marsh-birds, *about which one does not know what to say.* What Buffon's mind wanted above all things, was an extensive horizon. He was never so much at ease as upon the subject of the general laws of Nature. There his genius showed the power of divination. It has been said by a late writer, that Buffon's true merit consisted in having founded the historical and descriptive part of his science: praise or blame, it is not

quite correct. Buffon is, without doubt, an admirable historian of animals, especially as regards style; but this merit, rare as it is, is only secondary with him; his chief, his true merit, consists in having been the philosopher of natural history. Whether it is the discovery of the great law of the geographical distribution of organic beings, whether it is the settlement of the question of the variety of species, or whether it is the tracing out the origin of the earth, he always rises to the greatest heights that human speculation is permitted to reach. His history is the only one which deserves, after that of Bossuet, and more deservedly than his, the just title of the *Universal History*. The past, the present, the future even of our planet, all come within his embrace; aided by the light of genius, he boldly explores those depths of time where any other torch than that of revelation had hitherto failed to burn.

A modern author has said: "Buffon conjectures, Cuvier demonstrates." This is not just. If Cuvier has followed in the steps of any one, it must be Linnæus rather than Buffon. The school of Cuvier is more precise, less bold, has fewer general views, than that of his predecessor: the one is rather a sculptor, the other an architect. Buffon carves and builds on a large scale, regarding less the order and the perfection of details than the majesty of the whole, he aims unceasingly to produce the effects of perspective. The true disciple of Buffon is not to be found in France. This disciple is a son of Germany, it is Goethe, who added to his genius as a poet, the almost equal genius of a naturalist. "I was born," he has written of himself, "in 1749, in that memor-

able year of the publication of the three volumes of Buffon's work. I attach some importance to this coincidence."

The greatest of Buffon's works is the *Epochs of Nature*. This one, as usual, was the least thought of when first published. According to Laharpe, the author had written the romance of physics; but Laharpe is no authority in such matters. The nineteenth century has recurred to the work of Buffon and examined it, so to speak, from the heights of the elevation of science. This loftier point of view has been more favorable for Buffon. The admirable investigations of Cuvier, in throwing light upon the extinct beings of the world, have fixed with more precision the eras of the earth's formation, but they have not cast into oblivion the bold discoveries of the prince of naturalists. What an intuitive power of foresight must he have had in anticipating, in the absence even of facts, what the labors of half a century has not yet revealed to geologists!

Buffon was the first to carry his vision back to the primitive ages: from the chaos, hitherto an inexplicable mystery, from the darkness that covered the history of the earth, there shines a new light. From the present condition of the earth he deduced its former state. His eye scrutinized the records inscribed upon the surface of the earth, and buried in its depths; and from the vast stage of past events the mind of Buffon constructed a thoughtful drama. It can not be said of him:—

> Though God, your priest has often preached,
> God's councils yet you have not reached.

Buffon appears, on the contrary, to have been present at the councils of the Creator, so completely does he develop in his admirable style, the history of the origin of the world. After the general ideas of the author of the *Epochs*, there was nothing left but to use our eyes; the great plan of creation was marked out. Standing upon the buried monuments of our globe, Buffon opens to the view at each instant, as it were, by flashes of lightning, boundless horizons, that the science of our age has not yet reached. Without doubt, the work of Buffon contains a crowd of errors of fact, but these are details that time corrects, without injuring the unity of the structure. The naturalist recorded this great literary testament, at a period of life quite advanced; notwithstanding, as in the work of God which is the object of its contemplation, there can be found in it no traces of old age.

We have already spoken of the scruples, or, as it may be preferred, the fears of Buffon in regard to the Sorbonne that his bold speculations on the formation of the globe had aroused. "I hope," he wrote to the worthy Abbé Leblanc, that there never will be any question about putting my book under the ban of the church, and, indeed, I have done all I could not to deserve it, and to avoid those theological broils that I am more afraid of than all the criticism of the geometricians and natural philosophers." The Sorbonne, in fact, drew back beneath their sleek coat of fur, the claw that ought never to have been thrust out. Is it not sad to see a genius, like that of Buffon, purchasing freedom of thought at the price of the most humiliating submission? The book of Gene-

sis is a good book, without doubt; but must we, in order to gratify certain religious prejudices, deface that other book that Nature has written upon the surface of the earth? must we shut that book of genius in which the finger of God himself has written the characters of a developing creation? Nature is the ancient Isis, which was enveloped in an impenetrable mystery; she loves those bold geniuses, who, from age to age, have the courage to lift the veil.

Without always rising to that height, which is almost that of prophecy, Buffon, in his description of the habits of animals, shows a genius as a writer, that never had a model, and never will have an imitator. His manner is somewhat that of a writer of fables; he endows the lion with magnanimity; the cat he describes as faithless, inconstant, obstinate, thievish, cunning, and a flatterer, like all rogues.

"Animals," says Madame Necker, "appeared to be too remote from us; the art of Buffon consists in bringing them nearer and nearer to us." The historian of Nature, not contented with embellishing the French language, ennobles every subject he touches, by his peculiar manner.

Buffon is sometimes more grandiloquent than eloquent, for, being too eager in the pursuit of eloquence, he goes beyond it. We would not say with Vicq-d'Azyr, in his eulogium on Buffon, "Envy has pretended to find bombast in his style where there is nothing but beauty." There is beauty, but there is also bombast. Buffon was forced to go with his age.

Buffon had a dread of satire. When Rivarol entered society, he looked out for a new road to fortune; he knew that the man who had the will could

always find a sunny place in this world. It was his opinion, that that sly fox La Fontaine was not the only poet who had lived at the expense of those who listened to him; to speculate on flattery was a vulgar business, quite unworthy Rivarol; he preferred to speculate on satire.

"The world," he used to say, "is a vast arena, where the good and the bad, lambs and wolves, were mingled together; I will be vicious, I shall be feared, I shall make my fortune; at each scratch of my claws, they will applaud me; at each growl and bite, they will throw me a bone." This system succeeded to perfection. His first words of satire spread rapidly. Buffon received Rivarol with a thousand manifestations of favor. He offered him an apartment in his mansion, a country-house in the country. Rivarol made no objection. Who was the guiltier of the two?

This mode of entertainiug Nemesis, did not do Buffon much honor. It would have been more touching to have seen him ascend to the garret of some poor poet, showing himself the beneficent nobleman amid misery, rather than the hospitable lord to the critic. Rivarol, enthusiastic as he had become in favor of Buffon, did not flatter all the works of this great man. Of his son, he said: "That he was the worst chapter in his father's natural history: between the son and the father, a whole world intervened."

Critics did not await the death of Buffon before disputing his claims to genius. Read this clever page of Grimm's, *apropos* to the reception of Saint Lambert at the Academy: "On his entrance to the

Academy, a censer was put into his hands, with the understanding that he was to swing it not only behind him, toward the founders, but under the noses of the celebrated members of the Academy then living. The new Academicians worked the censer to perfection, and there is not a boy in the parish who could have done it better before the bearer of the holy sacrament. Apart from the illustrious President de Montesquieu, and the distinguished patriarch of Ferney, who have indisputable claims to our homage, and the gratitude of all ages, the Abbé Condillac and D'Alembert came in for their share of praise. I can not tell by what fatality Saint Lambert forgot M. Buffon, who was also one of the forty; I am tempted to act like the Gascon officer who, on returning from the palace where he had mounted guard, during a session of parliament under Louis XIV., stopped on the Pont-Neuf, before the statue of Henry IV., and said to his company, '*My friends, let us salute this one, he is as worthy as any of them.*' If Buffon is reproached for false hypotheses, no one, at any rate, can deny the elevation of his thoughts, the dignity and the beauty of his style."

There are a number of the sayings of this great writer that are often quoted: they are neither the best nor the truest. "Genius," he said, "is only great patience." This is false; patience neither gives insight into things, nor the knowledge of their relations; all this is a gift of nature. Genius is inspiration. Was it not to do honor to the visit of this daughter of heaven that Buffon dressed himself so finely, before entering his study? Of what use were

the embroidered ruffles, waistcoats and coats turned up with gold, if it were not to do honor to this invisible mistress of his mind? I prefer this other remark of his, not so famous: "Happiness comes from sweetness of temper." Buffon was thinking of Mademoiselle de Saint-Belin, whose happy life was the result of grace and virtue.

Buffon occupies, in the eighteenth century, a place by himself; pre-eminent as a philosopher during the reign of philosophy, he has grandly displayed the harmony between God and his universe. Less intellectual than Voltaire, less bold than Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he equalled Montesquieu in thought and the art of writing; according to Grimm, Montesquieu had "the style of a genius," and Buffon "the genius of style." This distinction is too antithetical; we prefer to find resemblances between those great men, or, rather, more simple contrasts; the one has grasped to perfection the spirit of the laws of society, the other, the spirit of the laws of nature. Their language, dignified and somewhat magisterial, has that solemnity which suits great facts; if Buffon, as it used to be said, sacrificed oftener to the graces than Montesquieu, it was always in full dress. "Buffon," said a clever woman, "renounces sometimes the spirit of his age, but never its pomps." Under the imposing style of Buffon, there were always new and liberal views, some favorable, others opposed to the philosophy of his times. The comet which robbed the sun of its glory, those vitrified and incandescent planets, that cooled by degrees, some sooner than others, according to their temperature, those increasing icebergs of the poles, those vast seas

which flowed from east to west, those islands, the remains of submerged continents, those lofty chains of mountains, those vertebræ of the globe, were severely criticised by mathematical minds, such as D'Alembert and Condorcet. This glorious eighteenth century, that was considered the golden age of speculation, was, on the contrary, mathematical to a degree; it measured common sense, poetry even, by a mathematical scale. Buffon, in that respect, rather belonged to our age than his own, for he had preserved the imagination of science. When the chain of events was deficient in a link, he supplied it. Where nature does not say a word, he speaks for it. A poet in his way, he is never so much at his ease as in the marvellous of conception and fact. Hume somewhere expresses his surprise in reading Buffon's account of the world; this surprise was the common feeling of all enlightened men. The eighteenth century, so to speak, witnessed the second creation of the globe.

All the opinions of Buffon are no longer considered as authority; but those upon the degeneration of animals, and upon the boundaries that climate, mountains, and seas, assign to each kind, may be considered, according to Cuvier even, as veritable discoveries. We might easily cite other observations of his upon the mechanism of the universe, which are by no means obsolete; but his chief glory consists in having founded the philosophy of Nature.

For genius to foresee is to see. Thus Buffon constructed, in advance, without having the materials under his eyes, the plan of the history of the earth. Since him naturalists have collected a multitude of

facts before unknown. They have gathered the remains scattered in the abysses of the earth, they have deciphered those medals of former ages in order to reveal to us, children of the earth, the chronology of the earth we tread. All this is, without doubt immense, if science does not believe in miracles any longer, it is because it performs them: purely professional jealousy! In the midst of these prodigies we must not forget him who first lighted the torch upon the buried ruins of past worlds. We ought not, in consequence of some inevitable mistakes, dispute Buffon's claim to having established the philosophy of the history of animals in its proper rank, among the exact and speculative sciences. Naturalists pretend to admire Buffon as a writer: writers praise Buffon as a naturalist. This tactic is not successful. The union of thought and style is nowhere so intimately combined as in this historian who stands alone, from whom we derive our knowledge of the works and designs of God in his visible world.

Like Pascal, who in a spirit of divination, thought out for himself the science of mathematics, and was thereby a discoverer, while he was at the same time the author of the *Provincial Letters;* like that inventive geometrician, who amidst all his calculations, wrote the preliminary discourse of the *Encyclopædia*, Buffon possessed the genius of both science and writing. Though he entered late in life, at forty years, upon the study of natural history, at the same age in which his contemporary Jean-Jacques Rousseau commenced as a writer, he found time to range over the whole circle of life, and the history of the universe. A philosopher at the same time, and to the same extent, as a naturalist, a writer of

the first order, he combined various excellences, any one of which would have sufficed to have immortalized him. To think — to know — to write, there is the whole man: that man was Buffon.

Of all the eulogies that Buffon and his genius inspired, here is the most beautiful, because the most simple:—

Sédaine who could make beasts talk nearly as artlessly as La Fontaine himself, sent in their behalf, the following vote of thanks to Pajou, who was the sculptor of a bust of Buffon:—

IN THE FOREST OF MONTBAR,
IN BEHALF OF THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH.

"Man Pajou! we are infinitely obliged to you. We can hardly thank sufficiently the man Buffon, for having so well described us; and you with your genius, your chisel, and the marble, have restored to us our impressions and his face; you have given us as perfect an idea of his intelligence as he has given of ours with his observation and the quill of one of our comrades.

"Do you know that he is no fool who can express the gratitude of beasts? Such gratitude is pure. Ours is not like yours, always spoiled by vanity. When we receive a kindness, we do not think we have deserved it.

"We do not make this remark for you, you must be like the man Buffon, good and sincere. You ought to have been both of you of us: you a lion, he an eagle. Adieu."

This little chef-d'œuvre, worthy of the antique, should have been inscribed upon the pedestal of Buffon's statue.

CARDINAL DE BERNIS.

He was *Babet the flower-girl* among the literary men of his day, the *feather-footed pigeon* at court; in a word, with the rest of the world he was Joachim de Pierres, or the Abbé de Bernis. He was born at St. Marcel, near Narbonne, in the month of May, 1715. His family, which belonged to the old nobility, was related to the king through the house of Rohan, which did not keep them from being any the less poor on that account. As there was nothing for Joachim, they made him an abbé. When quite a youth, he went to Paris, like Bernard, trusting to his star, smiling at every one he met, in order to get nothing but smiles in return. He was a good-looking youth, well made, had an enticing pair of eyes, an animated mouth, a heart on its guard, a soul upon his lips. Nature had made him in the image of a Hercules, neither more nor less; here the style was not the man, any more than it was with Bernard. Do not be very much astonished, that this youth, so handsome and clever, became, in the eighteenth century, a minister of state, a cardinal, almost king of France, acknowledging the empire of Madame Pompadour. He could become no less.

He passed a winter at St. Sulpice; but, like Boufflers, some time after him, so far from singing psalms, he took it into his head to warble about Delia and Chloe. At the end of the winter, he was made vicar of a small parish, in his native country. "Vicar!" said he, "I sha'n't trouble myself about so small an affair." He was soon made Abbé de Bernis, but without wishing to take a step farther. He lived in Paris, without a sou, but without a care, full of trust in his star. This star, which was one of the very best, dawned for him, for the first time, in the joyous and smiling face of a pretty milliner. There were in the *rue de la Comédie*, side by side, two shops, very attractive to youths like Bernis, who were on the lookout for poetry and love; a book shop and a milliner's shop. Our little abbé often passed these two shops; and it is not necessary to tell you with whom he preferred doing business, whether the milliner or the bookseller. The latter had at his service the poems of the profane Abbé de Chaulieu, the fables of the gay La Fontaine, the satires of the joyous Régnier; but the former had little rosy cheeks, a pair of eyes all alive with love, a mouth full of pearls and smiles. In truth this was worth the best book in the world, for this is the summary of that poem of the heart that God has written in letters of gold. Bernis, who was already a lad of education, had no occasion to go into the bookshop. The milliner-girl received, not without emotion, the attentions of our sighing abbé; she was pleased with them; at the second glance she smiled; after having smiled, she sighed; Bernis wrote her an epistle in the style of the day: "Oh, cruel Chloe,

what have you done to my heart?" The cruel Chloe answered, without hesitation: "Come to-morrow afternoon, and we will settle all that; but don't look at me through the window, you shut out the light from my work; that is the reason I can no longer do any good."

These amours continued a whole fine season; they were good-looking and warm-hearted lovers. "When we are young and good-looking," said Bernis, "an amour is a pardonable sin." He billed and cooed in the back shop, and did not trust either his verses or his good luck to the world outside; but the little milliner was so proud of her poet, that she published him everywhere. One evening she went with him to the play, where she met Madame Lenormand d'Etioles, whom she had the honor of having for one of her customers. Next morning she was sent for by this lady, who was renowned for her beauty. "I want you to make me a bonnet, Chloe; I saw you last night with a good-looking youth; he is your cousin?"—"No, madame, he is my lover."—"I have an idea of a bonnet that will be exquisite. Ah! he is your lover? Indeed! what does he do?"—"No great things, madame; he writes poetry."—"A poet! that's funny. Don't forget my bonnet. Tell your poet to come and see me."—"It is too great an honor, madame."

Bernis went to see, and returned to see Madame Lenormand, who received him with all the grace in the world. The poor little milliner had little left to do but to bite her lips, those lips so sweet that had been reddened by the kisses of her inconstant lover. She had to make the best of it, she was abandoned.

She soon married, out of spite; she was not happy, nor was her husband.

As for Madame Lenormand, she had christened Bernis her feather-footed pigeon; he was all he wished then, and that was a good deal. Soon after, Voltaire christened him Babet the flower-girl, firstly, in consequence of the flowers of his poetry, and, secondly, on account of his resemblance to a fat flower-girl of this name, who had for sale her portable flower-bed at the door of the opera. The Abbé de Bernis, the Cardinal de Bernis even, liked this pleasantry. Thus he wrote to Voltaire, "As regards the *Seasons* of Babet, it seems that they have maimed them terribly." Voltaire answered, "The old man of the mountains will not remain much longer the old man of the mountains; but to make things somewhat more gay, I have set myself about writing stories. There is one of them that has been printed at Paris, quite as badly as your *Four Seasons*. I have not dared to send it to a prince of the holy catholic church; in old times I should have presented Babet with a copy, and besought him to have strewed in it some of his flowers."

Rid of his little milliner, Bernis was no richer for it; but he laughed gayly at his poverty, like a wise man, who had already a presentiment of his good fortune. He still inhabited his little garret, that the little milliner had adorned with her beautiful eyes. The morning sun cast a ray of hope into it. What more does a young poet want, who is still sauntering along the verdant path of youth? And, besides, when the sun had gone down, there came something no longer through the window, but up the dark stair-

case, some pitying beauty, who cast her rays also. He did the honors of his lodging to perfection. With tact and sentiment there is no difficulty in getting along. The garret was in ruins; the abbé had "an old bed, covered with a horse-cloth, that M. de Ferriol had brought from Constantinople," a rickety table, covered with books and faded bouquets, an old worm-eaten sofa; but of what use are all terrestrial things when we can fly to heaven on the wings of love? Our abbé's purse was no better furnished than his garret. Every one knew it, and so well that Senac de Meilhan tells the following story: "When the Abbé de Bernis went to sup in town, it was customary to give him a crown to pay for his hackney-coach. This gift was first thought of as a joke, when the Abbé de Bernis refused to stop to supper, on the plea that he had no coach; but this joke lasted a long while."

Our ambitious abbé did not confine himself to love-making in order to get on in the world. He courted poetry that did for him what the little milliner had done. He presented his muse to the Princess de Rohan, who was remotely his cousin. The princess, who sought distraction, attached herself to the abbé and his muse, in different ways. He was in the hotel de Rohan all he wished to be. This hotel was then the resort of men of talent and charming women; our abbé was welcome; all the hearts and all the houses opened to receive him. Bernard and Bernis were all the rage. Voltaire who petted youth, addressed both of them in verse, Duclos praised their wit, Helvetius had them to supper, the women did all the rest.

Bernis was welcomed by every one but the Cardinal de Fleury. He wished an abbey, as a favor, to the Princess of Rohan, who was reproached for doing too much for Bernis. The cardinal was deaf to the application. "Abbé Bernis, you have made yourself unworthy the favors of the church by your debauchery: as long as I am in office you shall not have anything." — "Very well, my lord, I will wait."

This repartee was an event; it was repeated and praised everywhere, even in the presence of the king. Each one related it in his own way; some went so far as to metamorphose the cardinal into Madame de Pompadour. According to the memoirs of the times, Madame de Pompadour said to Bernis: "You are the last to whom I will grant my favors." Bernis replied: "Well, madame, I will wait." This version is the prettiest, but it is fiction; the other version is history.

It was upon the strength of this bon-mot, an *Epistle to the Graces*, his little poem the *Palace of the Hours*, and a couple of Anacreontics, that our amiable abbé presented himself for election to the Academy. The women were all in his favor, the members of the Academy unanimously elected him. He was received there, as everywhere else, as a spoiled child. "Now," said he to the Princess de Rohan, "I walk on firm ground." What he wished to express was this: "Hitherto I have been moored in the island of Cyprus, among the women, exposed to the tempests of love: now I am secure from love, and have a stronger ladder for my ambition."

Madame de Pompadour had been acknowledged

queen of France by a royal kiss. The Princess de Rohan deigned to write to her in behalf of her dear abbé, taking care to slip into her letter, a little stroke of wickedness: "Madame, you have not forgot the Abbé de Bernis; you will condescend, I hope, to do something for him: he is worthy of your favòrs." Apropos to this letter, Madame Pompadour wrote the following to some minister or other, I forgot whom: "I forgot to ask you, my dear simpleton, what you had done for the *Abé de Berny?* Send it to me I beg you, for I will see him on Sunday." Madame, who had a mind like Voltaire, had, like him, a manner of christening people in a way of her own; the king himself occasionally appeared in her grotesque calendar. Madame Pompadour presented her darling poet to Louis XV., with a smile. Bernis presented himself with an ode upon the *Lyric Poets.* Louis XV. was so charmed with the smile of the marchioness, that he offered Bernis at once an apartment in the Tuilleries, and a pension of six thousand francs. It must be mentioned, however, that the ode on the *Lyric Poets* concluded with the following verse:—

Sons of Horace and of Virgil,
His virtues and his justice sing,
Who to Augustus' love of art
Unites a Titus' generous heart,
A noble pattern of a king.

The abbé made such progress in the esteem of the king, and in the affection of Madame Pompadour, that after two years' residence in the palace, he was made embassador to Venice. A song of the day,

which was probably by Panard, joked upon the abbé and his fair penitent.

Do not trust much to what Casanova says about the stay of Bernis at Venice, for according to him, he had nothing to do there. But in those days embassadors were appointed for personal reasons rather than for purposes of state. He begged of Madame Pompadour his recall. He returned and besought his beautiful protectress to allow him to remain for life a spectator of her graces. It was on his return that he wrote an epistle, become famous in society; here is the beginning:—

'T was said young Cupid, Jove's own child,
Near Lignon, breathed his latest sigh,
I saw him where, in woodland wild,
Mused Pompadour in times gone by;
He was alone, the boy I spied;
His torch was out: the mead, the grove,
The babbling stream, all spoke of Love.

The Abbé de Bernis was for ten years the shadow of Madame Pompadour; he followed her everywhere, sometimes even too far. Louis XV. met him at every step in the small as well as the great apartments of his palace, which made him ask sometimes, "Where are you going, Abbé de Bernis?" The abbé bowed, smiling. One day that Madame Pompadour was ennuyéd, and he bored madame, she made him embassador to Madrid. He did not want to go to Spain. "I prefer a little corner of your footstool, to all the chateaux in Spain."* He was

* This French point can not be given in English. *Chateaux en Espagne* is analogous to our "castles in the air."

so supplicating that Madame Pompadour deigned to leave him sighing at her rose-colored slippers. In his quality of abbé, he was in the habit of listening at the doors, saying that the palace of the Tuileries was only his great confessional. He ended by knowing everything, and by holding council with the king and the marchioness. Truly a jolly farce might be made out of that council: a king who was ennuyéd, an abbé who had nothing to do but to amuse himself, a woman with her couple of lovers, whose heart's only distraction was business of state. The king of Prussia came in, however, to disturb the farce. One day Frederic was pleased to say *Petticoat the second*, instead of saying Madame the Marchioness de Pompadour; and besides he made a satire upon his reverence the Abbé de Bernis, count of Lyons, embassador to Madrid: *Beware of the sterile abundance of Bernis!* This was Frederic's beginning of the battle of Rosbach. In truth, perhaps, the revenge of Madame de Pompadour and the Abbé de Bernis, commenced the disastrous seven years' war.

While in the ministry he was assailed on all sides by a brisk cannonade of songs and epigrams. The Count de Tressan overwhelmed him with a terribly severe satire. He could not stand it any longer. The whole world got tired of him, even her ladyship who presided over the council of state; this was the finishing stroke. The Duke de Choiseul, after having succeeded him in the heart of Madame de Pompadour, succeeded him in his office. By the way of a sop they gave him the hat of a cardinal; hence this couplet:—

'T is said that to his eminence
This scarlet hat was only given,
To get rid of his reverence.

Besides he was banished to Vic-sur-Aisne. Greatness always terminates in exile; he was to do penance for his earthly glory. He was to conform himself to the law of the gospel; the complaints of the people were to be appeased. His exile was of the gayest kind; he received every week the visits of the most agreeable people from Paris and his neighborhood; the chateau in which he lived, and which still stands, was filled with a court, in which there was nothing wanting, not even a king, not even a queen. Notwithstanding, in this pretty village, with its houses scattered along a river, which flowed between two verdant mountains, he recalled his humble little muse, that had been scared away by the display of his grandeur; she now sung for him some few stanzas upon the vanity of all human things, but she might well sing, there was nothing better to be done.

He was made Archbishop of Alby, but, as was usual with him, he had never made his appearance in his diocese. In truth, the faithful never complained of him; they got along marvellously without his blessing. In 1769, he repaired to Rome, as embassador to the holy conclave, assembled for the election of Clement XIV., that priest, so gay, so amiable and so clever, who has written that sad people are like bushes that never flourish. Pope and cardinal were on the best terms possible. Our cardinal never saw France again; he found in Rome a second country as agreeable to his old age as France

had been to his youth. He inhabited a magnificent palace, where he lived in splendor. It was, for a long time, the hospitable resort of all French travellers. Every one was well received there, from the humble priest and the poor artist, to princes and princesses of the blood. As he used to say himself, he kept the inn of France in a thoroughfare of Europe. Bernis had taken as his model his friend, Pope Clement XIV., and to his last hour he was the most amiable of cardinals. He died, in 1794, faithful to his king and his God, cursing the French revolution, which had deprived him of half a million of revenue, and had swept away with contempt all the pretty artificial flowers of his poetry. He died in solitude and poverty, not as he had lived.

Immediately after his death, a publisher in Paris published his works, "stamped," as the preface states, "with the seal of immortality." I have related the life of the little abbé, the embassador, the minister of state, the cardinal; I will just skim over the works of the small poet.

For an introduction, there is his *Essay on Poetry*. "Poetry imitates the charms of paintings in its descriptions, and the tones of music in its harmony." Taking his start thence he abandons himself to his muse, full of ardor for metaphors and sonorous rhymes. He is nearly the only one of the gentle poets of the eighteenth century, who, in spite of Voltaire, had any regard for rhyme. Unfortunately for him, he consulted the rhyming dictionary oftener than that dictionary of poetry, the heart of the poet.

A fountain and a green *plot*
Shaded by an oak *antique*,

And a pretty little *cot*,
Where Love in dress quite *rustic*
Goes to pass every *season*
Without much rhyme or *reason*.

In his essay he is quite indignant at those poets who describe the country like Theocritus. "Their pictures of country life are without spirit; they describe nothing but the flowers of the meadow, the murmur of the streams, the tears of Aurora, and the sport of the zephyrs. Their drapery serves to conceal the Graces, and not to adorn them." In his youth, Bernis lived in the country, more like a poet than a country parson; most of the poetry of his age saw nature only through Virgil's Georgics; he had the happiness to catch glimpses of it such as God had made it, before he had seen Virgil's copy of it. Accordingly, he has some touches of true pastoral poetry.

MORN.

The amorous dove from tree to tree
From branch to branch is flying now,
And mingles his sweet melody
With the low murmur of the bough.

Scared by the sound of fauns that play
Upon the streamlet's quiet strand,
The naiads chaste their hair display,
Now fettered with a reedy band.

Ingenuous shame hath ever lent
To beauty its most powerful arm,
Of being nude th' embarrassment
Gives nudity its greatest charm.

Bernis never has the air of one in love; he is far from following his own precepts:—

> The muse is Bacchus' child they say,
> No poet could true love portray,
> Unless he wrote his amorous song,
> As in his mistress' arms he lay.

There may be, here and there, a Chloe and a Phyllis, that bloom in his verse, but they are not loveable. The profane goddesses sing and frolic in our poet's verse; in a word, there are amours but not love. As for his verse, *reason* always rhymes with *season*, and *fire* with *lyre*.

Bernis was not equal to an elegy or to an eclogue; he could neither love nor muse. A tale of gallantry, an Anacreontic ode, an amiable epistle (little too didactic, perhaps), occasionally a pretty fancy; these were, probably, the extent of his claim upon the domain of the muses. As a fancy, the following is tolerable:—

> The hostess is a charming creature,
> And needs no song or praise of mine;
> She 's Love's own bloom in every feature,
> And Hebe serves her for a sign:
> Bacchus swears she 's Ocean's daughter,
> As he bestrides a cask in state;
> Though she should give her guests but water,
> She 'd all of them intoxicate.

In his first epistle on *Taste*, he commences with this cry, with which all poets end:—

> E'en art, through art itself, is lost.

But, unfortunately, he ends where all other poets be-

gin. His epistle to the Graces is quite pretty and ingenious; it is full of charming verses:—

Love, with ever-bandaged eyes,
Sees all the faults he hides from us.
* * * * *
The vintage-girl that sweetly smiles
At young Sylvain, who drunken lies,
Teaches his heart, now free from wiles,
He'd better happy be than wise.

The little poems of Bernis are an amiable babbling, somewhat monotonous, which soothe the mind without putting it quite to sleep. Apropos to summer and autumn, the small poems of Bernis are better than the long ones of Saint-Lambert. There are some pretty pictures in *pastel*, in the taste of the day, which, after all, was not always so bad a taste. Besides, our cardinal has written a long poem in six cantos upon religion; but in it how bad a Christian, and much worse poet, he shows himself! It was hard work: there is not a ray from heaven, or from the Muses; it is cold, dry, elaborate, without lustre, without tone; in a word, without faith and without poetry.

Bernis has written in prose, on poetry, on love, on poetical enthusiasm, on curiosity, upon the taste for the country. He wished to follow in the wake of La Bruyère; but in poetry, as in love, to will is not to do. He speaks of poetry like a man who is not a poet; he reasons prettily enough about love; I do not know what he says about poetical enthusiasm; and about curiosity, he does not know himself what he wishes to say.

It can be said of Bernis, as of Bernard, what Ovid has said: *Sunt voces prætereaque nihil.* Their poetry is a whispering of the wind, a will-o'-the-wisp, that flies from the light, the echo of a song, that dies away with the pleasure of an evening bout, a little flower that hardly blooms till noon. You see that Voltaire had a reason for christening the author of those pretty nothings, *Gentil-Bernard*, and *Babet the flower-girl*, the author of those artificial bouquets that bloomed far away from the sun, the heart, and from nature, perfumed with musk, and not by the breath and dews of heaven, manufactured in a boudoir, before a comfortable fire, by a man who never even looked out of his window.

VADÉ.

I.

Let us sketch with a few touches the Corneille of the market-place, that rubicund physiognomy that glows in the gallery of the fourth-rate poets, all in a bloom with a carnival laugh. Let us welcome humor, whatever may be its mask; the wicked never laugh. There has always been a refuge in France for humor; before it played comedy, it sung. Vadé cultivated it, both in the theatre and the tavern, in comic opera and the drinking-song. In the seventeenth century, song dared the world with a laugh; it went humming, imprudent bee as it was, everywhere, even in the ear of Mazarin. When Molière came on the stage, humor at his will, assumed all the characters of comedy. When Molière was gone, humor went limping after Regnard and Dancourt as a last resort. Among the successors of Dancourt we must not forget Vadé; he was the last expression of the humor of the streets and by-ways.

In 1747, during the gayeties of the carnival, the

Countess of Chateau-Renaud celebrated the return of Count de Caylus, her friend, her cousin, some said her lover, by a magnificent masked ball. As Count de Caylus was fond of the society of artists and literary men, the Countess Chateau-Renaud invited to the ball, Duclos, Boucher, Gentil-Bernard, Vanloo, Piron, Moncrif, La Tour, in a word, all those charming men of talent who roamed over society. From the beginning the fête was brilliant; one might have thought himself at court from the noise of those gilded equipages, at the sight of those rich fancy dresses, all of them from oriental lands. The mistress of the mansion was beautiful, all the women were beautiful.

About midnight, at the hour when the dance was the most lively, a disturbance all of a sudden took place at the door; the dancing ceased; the women, somewhat more inquisitive than the men, even while dancing, hurried to where the noise was. Well, this was what was to be seen. A fishwoman of a fine figure and a goodly presence, all alive, brisk and buxom, dressed in her best, that is to say, in all the pomp of the marketwoman of a hundred years ago, had passed the antechamber in spite of the opposition of all the footmen who pursued her. But you should have seen how she hustled them with a noisy vigor. A kick here, a blow there. But, above all, you should have heard her. Her saucy slang startled even the grave family-portraits that had been banished to the gallery, which served as an antechamber during the fête; those worthy ancestors seemed to be indignant that such language should be heard in such a place.

Notwithstanding, the Count de Caylus, sent by the Countess Chateau-Renaud, approached our fishwoman. "Ah, there you are," she cries in a hoarse voice, imitating Mademoiselle Camargo in one of her comic parts, "I am glad of it, and to give you a touch of my quality, I'll dance with you three minuets, and throw in a shuffle or so; you are to pay the scot, you understand, and never mind the expense, for it is n't often you pay the piper."—"The compliment is not so badly turned," replied Count de Caylus, thinking to himself whether he had better answer her in her own way or not; but he was afraid he might get the worst of it; so he contented himself with eying her as she went through her picturesque movements.—"Madame, with whom have I the honor to dance?" asked he, bowing with exquisite grace.

All the spectators applauded the contrast. "My pretty beau, you are not so jolly green, you know a thing or two. I am Mademoiselle Rabavin, I am just about to be La Tulipe's wife; but the devil take the fellow, I'll make him pay for it; he has gone to the Courtille to sing and get drunk. I'll give him to-morrow, the first thing in the morning, a slap in his face; it is with this hand that I write all my compliments. There is more than one of them at the Courtille like Gros-Caillou, who has got one of my scrawls upon his dog-face, just to let 'em know that Margot Rabavin has the roughest kind of virtue. The devil! as if we did n't get out of bed on the wrong side sometimes. We will be saved like the rest of you, you princesses and all, that have got

confessors for night and day too. You must know that we go to vespers at Porcherons, where the pretty shop-boys come with their curly ringlets and green coats to ogle us. But for me, I gives my heart to La Tulipe."—"Then, madame, why do you come here, for this is called the Palace of Seduction?"—"The *bon Dieu*, who knows what he is about, has allowed the girls to play the devil with the men! I am in my Sunday's best, and here I am as fine as a fiddle! I know a thing or two! Since my fine fellow, La Tulipe, is away without me, with the glass in his hand, so am I without him, with my heart in my hand! Give me, I say, a man with a sword and a coat all over lace! After the minuet, we'll take a quart together, as we do at the dram-shop, and cool our gullets, so we will, my hearty!"

The Count de Caylus offered his hand gallantly to Mademoiselle Margot Rabavin. There was a wall of people on either side of them as they passed up. Every one admired the robust grace of the newcomer. The orchestra, that had for awhile been interrupted, renewed all its life. Count de Caylus and Margot Rabavin, after beating their hands to the music with a grace that was quite charming, commenced their minuet with great spirit, but with a great deal of gravity.

Those that were good judges of physiognomy did not remain long without recognising that, under the disguise of Margot Rabavin, there was concealed a man! But who was he? who was it that had so perfectly the careless air of the market-place and the slang of the by-streets? Conjecture was puzzled; it must be one of the frequenters of the hotel, for a

stranger would not have dared to present himself in such a disguise.

"What is strange," says the Countess Chateau-Renaud, "I do not recognise that face at all; since Moncrif is yonder, it can not be him."—Turning toward Carle Vanloo, who was one of the first in France to introduce into certain select saloons the somewhat unrestrained gayety of the studio: "Monsieur Vanloo, are you sure it is not you?"—"Indeed, madame," said the painter smiling, "I am not so sure!"

Moncrif approached the countess: "What, madame!" said he, somewhat in doubt, "don't you recognise that fellow Vadé?-Vadé! Vadé! Vadé!"

The name ran like lightning through all the apartments. Jean Vadé was then 27 years old; he was beginning to be celebrated for his poetical posies to Margot, as the Abbé de Bernis was for his to Chloris. Born at Ham (1720), but having come early to Paris, he had studied the picturesque poetry of the market-place, and was still a pupil there. He was a kind of good-for-nothing rake, but was endowed with some natural talent. An enemy to books and to teachers, he never could learn anything. He lived with his family, near the markets. Like Callot, who, in his youth tramped after the gypsies, like Teniers, who in returning from school used to amuse himself at the sight of the drunken sots; like Watteau, who used to remain for hours with his head out of a sky-light looking at the street-dancers, or listening to the travelling quack-doctors as they talked, Vadé, the originator of a species of poetry very inferior to the works of these masters of their art, used to spend all

his hours of leisure, sometimes even his hours of study, in contemplating the manners and in learning the emphatic language of the fishwomen.

In his youth he had the character of a prodigal child, we will not say of poets or of artists; for his style was far below either art or poetry. Notwithstanding his bad bringing-up and his perfect recklessness, he was taken at twenty years of age under the protection of some friends of his family, and received the appointment of comptroller at Soissons and Laon, "of which places he was the delight for four years," if we must believe a grave historian, who wrote an account of his life and posthumous works. In 1743, or rather four years later, on his return from a journey to Normandy, he returned to Paris, declaring that he did not wish to live anywhere else. As the fame of his bold fancy and his licentious gayety had spread from one to another, from café to boudoir (the gay talk of the time of the Regency was not quite obsolete), it became the fashion to receive Vadé in some of the celebrated saloons of the day. The Duke d'Agénois, who was fond of a laugh, offered to make Vadé his secretary. Vadé, who loved life, did not wait to be urged, for he was without a sou. It was arranged between the duke and the poet of the market-place, that, for a consideration of 2,500 francs a year, Vadé should follow the duke everywhere; that was, moreover, all he had to do. The duke was well pleased to make the society among which he lived believe that he had something to do, since he kept a secretary. Never before were a great man and his secretary so well pleased with each other.

Such was the position that Vadé had acquired up

to the day of the masked ball of the Countess Chateau-Renaud.

It was the Duke d'Agénois himself, who had on that day performed the duties of valet de chambre for his secretary. They had gone together to borrow the dress of the most coquettish fishwoman in the market. I have forgotten, perhaps, to mention that Vadé was a very good-looking fellow, though somewhat too robust. You might see that by birth he belonged to the lower classes, from his manners, and sometimes from his tastes. He might go into the best society with the Duke d'Agénois, he could never get the air of a well-bred gentleman; he retained the free manners of some of his heroes; it happened that his good nature and liveliness amused the indolent of the saloons, and of society; but as for Vadé, he only amused himself in the tavern, in mad and noisy bouts, at the Café Procope, or in the crossway of the Rue de Bussy, at the old Caveau, with Piron, Panard, & Co.

When it was clear at the Countess Chateau-Renaud's, that Mademoiselle Margot Rabavin was no other than Monsieur Jean Vadé, all the great ladies eager for pleasure, besought the poet of the market-place to do them the pleasure of dancing with them. He was the hero of the fête. The Count de Caylus was quite a secondary personage; Vadé received all the glances, all the pretty compliments, all the sweet smiles, that were intended for the illustrious traveller. The Count de Caylus would discourse about the pyramids, the obelisks, the ruins of Thebes, the source of the Nile; but on that night there was no wish to decipher the hieroglyphics of the desert, preference was

given for the study of the language of fishwomen. Here was a good sample of feminine curiosity, or rather of the spirit of contradiction, which rules the world. They were to have spoken about the splendor of antiquity, with all the poetry of history! they preferred a jest.

There was at the Countess Chateau-Renaud's ball, a young mad-cap, worse than all the rest, the Baroness de Beaupré, who was overwhelmed by the attractions and eloquence of Vadé; she had married, a short time before, a clown of a husband, a country-gentleman of Poitiers, who wished to imprison her in the country. This prospect, so far from checking the ardor, only added to the baroness's desire for pleasure; she wished, at least, before doing penance, to have some sins to be penitent for. No philosopher, whatever may be said, is more of a logician than a woman.

Six weeks had already passed, during which the Baroness de Beaupré waited, or rather sought the hour that was to be fatal to the baron, the devil's hour, as Voltaire termed it. The devil had his hour, thanks to Vadé. The Baroness de Beaupré was pursued by a crowd of admirers, who all swore they would live and die for her. Vadé did not swear as much; full of his triumph, that his heart should be concerned was the last thing in the world he thought of. Among her adorers, the Baroness de Beaupré had deigned to take some interest in the Marquis de Montaignac, who was a man highly distinguished; he was cited as a model of gallantry now extinct. A great deal was said of the adventures he had had at court, at the theatre, and the opera. The giddy baroness,

since he deigned to implore her favors, should have by all means bestowed them with fervor; but she was highly imaginative, and had a strange taste for odd and out-of-the-way things. As soon as she saw Vadé dance a shuffle, as soon as she heard him sing some of his grotesque love-songs, she confessed to herself, rather vaguely at first, that it would be more piquant to have an adventure with Vadé than with the Marquis de Montaignac. The heart of a woman is an abyss, in which I would not like to lose myself in trying to explain this extravagant fancy. This much is certain, that before the ball was over, the baroness had asked Margot Rabavin to come and see her at the hotel of her aunt, an old wicked one, who had had her day during the full bloom of the Regency. If we are to believe the baroness, her purpose was to amuse her aunt; but Vadé, who was unsophisticated, was not however deceived; he imagined that the baroness was mad in love with him.

The day after, in the afternoon, he presented himself at the hotel of the old lady, Madame de Marrens. He had by no means, the conquering look he had the night before: it was the first time that he was about to have a gallant interview with a great lady, for hitherto he had lived carelessly from day to day with the Columbines of the stage, or the grisettes of his neighborhood.

He had hardly given his name to the valet, who was about announcing him, when the Baroness de Beaupré presented herself, all gay and lively, in a lace mantle, a flowing, open dress, in the style of the day, and in a bonnet in full feather; she said to him, "My coach is below, awaiting us; will you allow me

to go on a journey with you?"—"How, madame, to the end of the world, if you will."—"I have, for a long time, wished to explore a country that you are well acquainted with."—"I am then to be carried off," thought Vadé.—"I mean the markets; the Count de Caylus said last night, that since the Regency, French gayety had fled thither."

While they were thus conversing, the baroness and Vadé had descended the steps of the hotel. A lacquey hurried to open the door for him: "Follow me, my dear sir." The baroness sprang into the carriage, Vadé took his seat by her side. I will not give word for word, what was said during their singular promenade, when, having alighted from the carriage, they went through the market-place, that labyrinth paved with good intentions, but echoing with bad words. The baroness had besought Vadé to start here and there a lively conversation with the inhabitants of the place. "Take care, madame, I will not answer for the dirt thrown."—"In war all is fair; I am not afraid of anything to day."—"Then, madame, we will try and show you a farce." Vadé made a brilliant onset upon a herring-woman; the baroness, though all in a flutter, was quite amused. The grotesque reproaches, which flew from mouth to mouth with the noise and rapidity of the firing of a musket, did not reach her ears without startling her, somewhat the more so, as she had to suffer for being in the company of Vadé.

When they had got toward the end of their journey, Vadé said: "We must not forget a little oyster-woman, who is worth a look for her beauty; besides, she is well able to return a compliment, for if

she has her heart in her hand, it may be also said she has her wit upon her lips."

In truth, the baroness soon observed a young girl all in a ruddy glow, who was arranging in order her open oysters upon the straw. She was of a dazzling freshness and bloom. As she was always smiling, her white teeth shone as clean and white as those of a young hound. Her hair, black and glistening, braided in a thick knot, appeared below her white cap; her long eyelashes only half concealed the fire of her large eyes. Her neck, vigorously and artistically supported by her shoulders, was slightly burned by the sun; a large golden cross attached to a velvet riband hung upon her bosom, and was half hidden in the folds of a white gauze handkerchief, which covered, without concealing, a bosom almost too superb. Her face, though not perfectly regular, was pretty, from its youth, its wholesomeness, and even in expression.

The Baroness de Beaupré caught a knowing glance, that passed between the dealer in oysters and her guide. For the first time in her life she was jealous, for she saw at once, particularly as she recollected what had been told her of the life of Vadé, that this beautiful girl, so fresh and enticing, if she was not his mistress of yesterday, would be his mistress of to-morrow. "Well," sighed the baroness, in leaning upon the arm of her companion, "have you nothing to say to her?"—"The deuce, Nicolle," says Vadé, in trying to catch hold of her golden cross, "you have got a superb cotton short gown. Was it one of Picpus' dragoons that gave it to you?"—"My short gown," answers Nicolle, in raising her herself to her full height, and putting her arms a-kimbo, "is worth,

any day, that lace rag your princess has got over her eyes; may the devil fly away with me if it don't look like a calf's pluck."

Vadé, annoyed at finding Nicolle giving it to the baroness, tried to make her understand that she was not doing the honors of her kingdom very creditably. "Go away with you, begone, such folks as I am don't understand Latin. What a milk-and-water face! what has your princess got under her nose? My God, it's a fly! I'll be hanged if it isn't a fly that's got into the milk."—"Wench," cried Vadé, "hold your tongue, or I'll slit it with my sword."—"Your sword? where have you ever fleshed it? it was never wet with the blood of a Christian, I'll swear; do you keep it to defend that butterfly of the night there? Take care, or the wind will blow her away, with her face that has got no beef in it."—"That is quite enough," said the Baroness de Beaupré, drawing away Vadé, who was getting heated with the dispute. "Be off, then," says Nicolle, "but take care he don't bite, for he is mad."

Seeing that Vadé was going off, contrary to her expectation, without saying a word more, Nicolle ran after him, saying: "You'll not forget that I expect you to-night, at the fair of St. Laurence."

She had hardly said these words, when she ran off, humming this song of Vadé's:—

> The cursed coach that by has dashed,
> And both of us all over splashed;
> Deuce to pay with our socks so neat,
> We look like fellows of the street.

"You will not go to the fair of St. Laurence?" asked the Baroness de Beaupré, when Nicolle was out

of hearing. "Perhaps," answered Vadé. That evening Vadé did not go to the fair of St. Laurence; he was more and more in earnest in his passion for the baroness. The pretty baroness, who had the whole day to herself, succeeded in keeping him to dinner, at the house of her aunt, who received her with the culpable curiosity of those old women, who console themselves for their past intrigues they can never have again, by being witnesses to those of younger people.

The Baroness de Beaupré parted with Vade in the evening, with the promise that he would return next day. "But, by-the-by," she asked, in a careless way, in bidding him farewell, "where does that pretty piece of insolence live, who was so complimentary to me, this morning?"—"I don't know?" answered Vadé wlth a bow. "You don't know?" replied the baroness, "you do, and you must tell me."—"Have you the fancy to go and expose yourself again to the jeers of Nicolle?"—"Who knows? I am curious to know where those ladies live, who reign so despotically in the market-place."—"I believe that Nicolle lives in the Rue Barre-du-Bec, over a wine-shop."

Next morning, at an early hour, the Baroness de Beaupré's coach drew up before the Hotel de Ville. She had ordered her coachman to drive to Rue Barre-du-Bec, but it was useless, the honest fellow could not penetrate that labyrinth of narrow and crooked streets.

II.

The beautiful baroness, lifting up the train of her dress, arrived as light as a cat, without soiling her feet a great deal, at the house described by Vadé.

It was one of those old drinking-shops, where the light of the sun hardly penetrated, even at full noon: although it had the *sign of the cross*, it was guarded by a fierce shrew, who had been buffeted by all the storms of vice. "Mademoiselle Nicolle?" asked the Baroness de Beaupré, without venturing to cross the threshold. "Nicolle!" asked the woman of the shop, looking askant at the new-comer, "you don't know then, my beauty, that the birds leave their nests the first thing in the morning."—"Has Mademoiselle Nicolle, then already gone?"—"Wait a bit, I think I saw her just go up the stairs; however, if it pleases you, go up; it is at the top, the last door. Take care you don't break your neck on the stairs."

Saying these words, the woman went into the shop in the rear, and returned, handing the baroness a lantern.

Though the baroness was followed by her valet, she got frightened, and thought of beating a retreat; but her curiosity emboldened her, as it does all women. Her servant took the lantern and preceded her. After an ascent by no means the safest in the world, the Baroness Beaupré arrived at the half-opened door of Nicolle. The oysterwoman, hearing some one on the outside, put out her head, quite surprised.

"Mademoiselle," said the baroness, "I have a word

to say to you." Nicolle timidly courtesied.—"Come in," she said, getting out of the way to let her pass. The baroness entered, ordering her servant to remain outside. Nicolle prayed her to be seated upon a sort of stool, placed under a little diamond-shaped glass window, which she hastened to open, to let a little more light into the room. Though it was in a horrible house, this little room had a certain air of youth and gayety about it, doubtless because it was inhabited by Nicolle. The baroness, in looking about, imagined she could hear the echo of the free lively songs of the pretty girl.

After a moment of silence, the baroness raised her eyes to the face of Nicolle, who stood before her in a timid and respectful attitude.—"Mademoiselle Nicolle, do you love Monsieur Vadé?"—Nicolle turned as red as a cherry, which surprised the baroness very much, for she did not forget the oysterwoman of the day before.—"Come, my dear," resumed the baroness, "speak to me freely: do you love Monsieur Vadé?"—"Yes, madame."—"Very much?"—"A little."—"Since how long?"—"Too long; for youth and time, too, is wasted by that kind of nonsense."—"My child, do you think that love is time wasted? Have you any reason to complain of Monsieur Vadé? He is a gallant, something of a fool, like all young men who allow themselves to be dazzled with a pair of bright eyes, like yours."—"Indeed, madame, I have nothing to say against him, except that he did not come yesterday to the fair of St. Laurence. But," added Nicolle, casting down her eyes, "when one goes with such fine ladies—" —"It was only in fun, you must understand."—"No, I do not under-

stand, for I am not very learned in such things; but may the Lord take care of him!"—"Tut, tut! don't vex yourself, Monsieur Vadé will come back more in love than ever."—"Oh, I am not sorry that he goes with you; on the contrary, I wish he would come back with all the manners of those fine gentlemen, for I have always found fault with him for being nothing but a countryman of my own, with his common ways and his words just like ours. I would like it better if he had little less mind (since you say that he has so much), and more of the air of a lord."—"That is surprising," thought the Baroness Beaupré; "here is an oysterwoman who would wish to be loved by a prince of the blood, while I, whom all the first men of the court pursue, am flattered by the homage of Vadé. Contradiction of contradictions! all is contradiction in the heart of a woman! Since it is so, I will send Mademoiselle Nicolle a lover worthy of her."

The Baroness de Beaupré had detached a small gold chain from her chatelaine.—"Here," said she to the oysterwoman, "keep this in remembrance of me."—"My good madame, how good you are, and to me, too, who had not the courage to ask your pardon for having insulted you so grossly yesterday!"

Nicolle attempted to kiss the hand of the baroness, but the latter kissed affectionately the blooming cheeks of the young fishwoman.

In the evening, the Baroness de Beaupré met the Marquis de Montaignac, at the opera.—"You do not know, marquis," said she to him, in order to rid herself of his importunities, "what a beautiful girl I saw yesterday, who would be delighted to sacrifice

her heart to you; all she is looking for, is a prince of the blood. Do you wish me to point out the way by which you may find her."—"Was she at the Countess Chateau-Renaud's ball?"—"No. Go to-morrow and breakfast in the Rue Montorgueil; ask for some of Mademoiselle Nicolle's oysters; soon you will see a beauty, in a white cap and cotton short-gown, worthy of Rubens, or rather of Murillo."—"You excite my curiosity, baroness; but how can I take any interest in a face, however charming it may be, when I have before my eyes, even in your absence, your beautiful one, that neither Rubens nor Murillo could copy, so divine and full of sensibility is it."

This did not prevent the Marquis de Montaignac from going to breakfast, with a friend, at a tavern in the Rue Montorgueil. Nicolle was there, and charmed him. She did her best to avoid it, but was obliged to eat her oysters with the marquis, and drink the Rhine wine in spite of herself. Toward the end of the breakfast, Nicolle observed, with admiration, that Monsieur de Montaignac was always a marquis, although he conducted himself in a somewhat freer way than Vadé himself. She allowed herself to be seduced, little by little, to such a degree, that when he spoke of carrying her off, she threw herself into his arms, all blushing and happy!

The marquis left his companion under the table, and went off with Nicolle in his coach, singing like a gay dragoon. The oysterwoman was ravished with delight; she never wearied listening and looking at the marquis. "But," said she, with some embarrassment, "what will you do with me by-and-by?"—"I will love you."—"But afterward?"—"I have

a little cottage at Montparnasse, a charming retreat, in the middle of a garden, a veritable terrestrial paradise. There you will be beautiful; you will pass the time in loving and awaiting me. If that should weary you, you can become an actress."

Nicolle expressed all her joy in a smile of happiness. "But," replied she, "will I ever have the courage?"—"Why not? when a girl has got a pretty face, she is more than half an actress."—"At the little theatres of the Fairs, perhaps, but at the *Comedie*, where my godmother took me last Easter, never."—"Don't trouble yourself in advance; you are not going to make your début to-morrow."—"Unless," continued Nicolle, following his idea, "I should play Marinette with her Gros-René."—"You are right; you would make a capital servant in Molière's play."

Madame Nicolle Delarue made her *débût* at the *Comedie-Française*, in 1748, as a little article of Jean Fréron tells us. The report spread on all sides that she had been an oysterwoman. It was at first supposed that this contrast would be a cause of success; it was quite otherwise. Actresses should be surrounded, in order to preserve the illusion of the theatre, by a kind of poetical and mysterious atmosphere, that I can not very well describe. If Iphigenia, who is to be offered up as a beautifully pale and pure sacrifice, should have been caught the night before over the fire making the pot boil, all the effect of the scene would be lost, unless the talent of the actress should be great enough to abstract us perfectly and elevate us to her high conception, as it were, by magic.

Nicolle Delarue, who was so much at her ease in the market-place, did not seem upon the stage either natural or graceful, always pretty, however, but without talent. She was, however, applauded immensely during her first appearance: but this triumph did not last long; after a short time, she retired from the stage, having been ill-treated by the other actresses, who forgave her her want of talent, but never forgave her her pretty face.

Vadé, who was present at her triumphant débût, in the Baroness de Beaupré's box, was faithful to her at least after her fall. After an ill-sorted union, which lasted for more than a year, each one was delighted, the marquis as well as the baroness, the poet of the market-place as well as the oysterwoman, to find themselves as they were before. Only Nicolle on leaving the stage never went back to the Rue Barre-du-Bec, to resume her white cap and her cotton short-gown; she married Jean Vadé, with great form and ceremony, in the church of St. Germain-des-Prés.

We do not wish to trace any further the romance of the Baroness de Beaupré; we believe that she did not harbor any bitterness against the Marquis de Montaignac. We have given this little piece of history, though somewhat spiced with gallantry, not only to bring Vadé on the stage, but to show once more how the human heart ever seeks the unknown and delights in contrasts.

Vadé never forgot the baroness; he always preserved as a delightful memento, an inkstand, with some gold pens, that she sent him with her farewell letter. Read how Vadé turned off some lines of

gallantry on the occasion! It will be seen that he fell into the style of the perfumed madrigal of the little abbés of his day:—

So much each pen from you I prize,
That e'en the god with bandaged eyes
In vain would offer to exchange,
Against the best that he could bring;
I still should lose, how wide the range,
E'en could I pluck from his own wing.

The Duke d'Agénois continued to protect Vadé; it was with regret that he parted with his cheerful secretary; he solicited and obtained for him another office of controller; but this time Vadé was able to live in Paris. His wife presented him, during the early years of their marriage, with half a dozen fine rosy, chubby children, who enlivened very much the humble dwelling of the poet. Until then, Vadé had only written drinking-songs. Piron and Panard had often advised him to try his hand at operas, for the theatre of the fair of St. Laurence. While sowing his wild oats, he was a constant attendant at that theatre; he followed the advice of his two predecessors. From 1752 to 1757, he wrote no less than eighteen comic operas, some for the theatre of the fair of St. Laurence; others for the theatre of the fair of St. Germain.

Vadé died, in 1757, during the feast of the Pentecost, leaving behind him poor Nicolle Delarue, and three or four children hardly out of the cradle yet. He was only thirty-seven years old; he was said to have died of his sins. Grimm, in his letters, very disdainfully delivered the following funeral ora-

tion: "His death was the result of an ill-regulated life. I could never succeed in finding out Monsieur Vadé's talent; he knew very well the slang of the market-place, but he never used it with any skill." I have been unable to find any traces of his family in the papers of his day. I do not know whether Nicolle survived him a long time. She had been unable herself to succeed on the stage; we can conceive that the hope of all her life was accomplished, when we find Mademoiselle Vadé making her début at the *Comédie-Française*. Grimm speaks of her début thus: "Mademoiselle Vadé, the daughter of the poet of that name, is not so pretty as Mademoiselle Contat; but she has a pleasing style of face, and, in spite of her bad accent, has a voice that interests, a delicate and elegant figure; she has been a pupil of Mademoiselle Dumesnil. You might suppose her possessed of a lively sensibility, but she wants dignity and taste. The style of her features, and that of her acting, recall too often the kind of poetry that her father had the glory of excelling in."

Vadé himself made his début at the theatre, with a parody on *Omphale*, which was very popular. Among his pieces have been mentioned the following: *The Impromptu du Cœur*, *la Veuve indécise*, *le Poirier*, *Nicaise*, *les Racoleurs*, *le Trompeur trompé*, *les Troyennes de Champagne*. Doubtless, as our fathers understood humor, all those little operas must have had, on the stage, a good deal of hearty natural fun. I acknowledge, however, that in reading these obsolete productions, I can find neither talent nor humor. Of art, also, there is not a trace. Vadé was neither a poet nor a literary man, a mere

manufacturer of songs of no merit, a feeble echo of Panard.

The Abbé de Voisenon has very humorously retracted his share in the praise that was bestowed upon Vadé: "He is wrongly called the founder of the *poissard* style. He was stimulated to a noble emulation in reading the *Etrennes de la Saint-Jean*, the *Œufs de Pâques*, the *Ecosseuses*, the *Bals de bois*, and the *Fêtes roulantes*. The chief authors of these works were the Chevalier d'Orleans, grand prior, the Count de Caylus, Moncrif, and the younger Crébillon:—

"Among so many heroes, myself I dare not name."

This amiable circle that Madame du Deffant called the tail of the Regency, was composed of twelve men of rank, or literary persons, who had resolved to sup well and to be clever—between their second and third bottles.—They supped sometimes at Mademoiselle Quinault's, sometimes at Count de Caylus'. Each one paid his scot, by the composition of a burlesque history, which next morning was sent to the printer, and soon to the bookseller. The collection sold well enough to allow Mademoiselle Quinault and Count Caylus, the responsible editors, to employ the best cooks in Paris! It is from this quarter that have issued so many monumental works, such as the *Battle of the Dogs*, the *Ballet of the Turkeys*, the *Sheep's Tail*. Vadé, says the Abbé de Voisenon, could never equal these distinguished productions. The grand prior, author of the *Battle of the Dogs*, and of the *Ballet of the Turkeys*, was christened, with a better right than Vadé, the Cor-

neille of the market-place; but "if Vadé had not the honor of first inventing this style of writing, it is at any rate certain that it died with him, and we say, Amen."

There are among the works of Vadé a whole volume of songs, of tales, and fables; the tales are licentious, without fancy or talent; the fables have neither simplicity, interest, nor descriptive power. Of the songs, the *amphigouris* — the nonsense verses — are odd, and not without some little humor. It can be seen from the very beginning of the suppers at the Caveau, that Piron, who was the leader of the jovial company, desired to re-establish the sonorous rhyme of the poets of the sixteenth century. People amused themselves, as they used to, fifteen years ago, with childish verse. Here is a specimen in this *amphigouri* of Vadé:—

AMPHIGOURI.

(Nonsense Verses.)

Josaphat
Is a flat,
A soft one,
Who thinks he's a wise one;
For he goes alone
To the torrid zone,
Criticising,
Victimizing
Agrippine,
For having read at Prau
The works of Pro-
Serpine.
If the public will forget
All the harm he's done as yet,

If it's so,
Then Dido
Has, just like us,
The right to go to the park
That's intended for Mark
Aurelius.

The chief want in the songs of Vadé is variety, for they contain nothing but that everlasting burden of the French song, *the delights of Bacchus and Love.* The Greeks also sung the same tune; but instead of singing in a tavern like our French song-writers, they sung in a palace, at a banquet, where the gods themselves might not have been ashamed to sit; instead of Anacreon and Paniasis, the French had, a hundred years ago, their Panard and Vadé.

As song-writer, writer of farces, tales, and fables, Vadé lives no longer, and, in fact, never has lived. But since his name recalls to mind a burlesque style of writing still somewhat in vogue, let us see if the poet of the markets deserves a place in the history of literature. Jan Steen, Van Ostade, Brauwer, and Teniers, have represented with skill and truthfulness the low life of the Flemish people. How is it that their paintings have such a charm, while the descriptions of Vadé are entirely without interest?

It is because painting, by means of color, and the pictorial heightening for effect, always keeps itself up to the standard of art whatever may be its subject, while poetry loses its character and its magic power when it loses its self-respect. Painting can only seduce through the eyes; poetry strikes the soul at once; well, what one of us is there, whose soul would be impressed by the famous work of

Jean Vadé, *the Broken Pipe*, *an epic-tragic-poissardi-heroic-comic poem*, of which it is impossible to quote four lines without offending the ear?

There is one day, however, in the year when Vadé is a national poet—a sad day for French genius—Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras. Yes! Vadé has sketched, with a bold hand, the characteristics of that coarse muse who, with her arms akimbo, her eyes on fire, her neck bare, throws at the excited crowd, from the top of her masquerade car, her drunken and insolent jests.

DORAT.

I.

We are far from regretting those days when the poetry of gallantry, raillery, and love-making, ruled supreme; those fine days redolent of sweet odors, when the small poets flourished, with their mock heroics, their small talk in verse, and their frivolous poems; the days of those light productions which had their birth in the boudoirs of mad-cap marchionesses, but never saw the morrow, for that morrow was 1789. Here and there may be found some points of interest in this subject, which has been dismissed with more contempt than it deserves; the mind runs no risk in this region, now a desert; inspiration will never catch you among those flying shadows. We may, without fear of harm, gather and smell those faded bouquets, touch that broken lyre, which has so often invoked the madness of love; the bouquets have no longer any odor, the lyre no longer sounds. They passed away with the last sigh of Louis XV. The rustic masques of Watteau, the graceful *pastels* of La Tour, the goddesses, the Muses, and the Graces, Love and Apollo, in a

word, all the fine folks of Parnassus and Olympus, those old illusions, so bright to the last, all vanished for ever, at the first muttering of the revolutionary storm. The fine season of the eighteenth century was nearly past; the poor swallows had flown away never to return; Dorat was then extinguished; Dorat, who for twenty years had been the king of those illusions, raised a monument to them from his own ashes.

Apropos to our poet, I was making my way to the Mazarin library, but I was turned out of my course as follows. I had stopped before the shop of a dealer in plaster-casts, at the door of the Institute, looking for these pretty loves that so gayly enliven the poetry of Dorat, or those madcap marchionesses of Boucher, which have only a rose upon their bosoms to veil them, even when they are disguised as shepherdesses. I wanted in that way to carry back my thoughts to the eighteenth century; I had already made fair progress, when the old Chevalier de V—, whom I had met last winter at the *soirées* of a gentleman of the city, happened to pass quite opportunely. "What are you doing here?" he asked.—"My dear whist-partner, I am doing my best to decipher the frontispiece of the eighteenth century, or, to speak more intelligibly, I am trying to learn something about the history of Dorat."—"Dorat, the bold dragoon? and what books are you going to refer to?"—"To no single one in particular, but to all, especially, however, to the journal and works of Dorat."—"That is all very well as far as it goes, but I know where there is an old book somewhat worn by age, a precious book, which dates as

far back as 1754, and which is full on this poet. Trust me and consult that book."—"But in what library?"—"Rue Saint Dominique. Come for me this evening at eleven o'clock."—"At eleven o'clock!"—"Yes, the book referred to is only open at that hour; I am serious; you shall see. Farewell!" And my old whist-partner was off without saying another word. As he was not given to exaggeration, I took him at his word, and went to see him at his lodgings at all hazards. He was waiting for me. "Ah! the deuce," said he, when he saw me, "you have neither ruffles nor laces to your sleeves."—I smiled.—"Nor powder, nor red heels; in truth, that do n't show common sense: you are dressed just like the poets of the present day; it was hardly worth dressing at all in that costume. Believe me, if you wore a waistcoat in the style of Louis XV., a pair of silk breeches, with all their accessories, bearing in mind the spirit of that time, you would be better received in the library I spoke of. But, notwithstanding, let us be off to the rue St. Dominique."

We soon arrived at the door of a little neglected hotel, somewhat enlivened in front by a number of bright lamps. The old housekeeper who opened the door for us, remarked to the chevalier: "You have come quite apropos, there is to be a little supper this evening." Here, thought I, is a library that makes a fair promise. We ascended the stone steps which led to a large well-lighted vestibule. Thence we passed into a bedchamber, which was a faithful reminiscence of the eighteenth century; velvet, silk, carved furniture, gilding everywhere; some *pastels*

by La Tour, a portrait of Regnault, some paintings by Boucher, ornaments, tapestry-hangings, a gilded bed; in a word, nothing was wanting, not even the old inlaid buhl cabinet; but where were the little abbé, the small poet, and the petit-maitre? "Perfect!" exclaimed I, on entering; "but where is her ladyship, the marchioness?" — "You have rightly guessed, there is a marchioness here: she is making her toilet for the evening." I was more and more surprised and charmed; it was like reading a fairy tale. The sudden arrival of the lady of the house only added to the illusion. She was a marchioness of eighty-four. The snows of half a century had fallen upon her head, but that did not prevent her from using powder as they did in 1775. Hers, however, was a charming, smiling old age, though somewhat sad; her dress was antiquated but pleasing; a satin robe with a flowing train, a fine, richly embroidered lace mantilla, a small cap adorned with ribands, silk slippers, and bracelets with large medallions. She leaned upon a *femme-de-chambre*, who was quite wide awake, and laughed in her sleeve at the affectations of the poor marchioness. "There, there is our library," my Mentor remarked to me as she entered. He waited until his ancient friend had seated herself in her arm-chair, before he presented me. She had scarcely glanced at us. Her *femme-de-chambre* assisted her to her seat, and handed her her spectacles, which did not spoil her looks at all. We approached her in silence. My whist-partner was spokesman. "Marchioness, I present to your ladyship a young poet, one of your friends." The marchioness succeeded in calling up

a remnant of one of those smiles of the eighteenth century, and which are only now to be found in the *pastels* of the day. "A young poet, one of my friends; oh, cruel one, what you say is not a madrigal, but an epigram."—"Your ladyship knows that I am sincere; I wished to convey to you the idea that our young poet was a great reader of Dorat.—Do not be offended," the old gentleman whispered in my ear, "but for the present, Dorat must pass with you for a poet." At the name of Dorat, the marchioness cast a tender glance at the medallions of her bracelets. "Dorat! Dorat!" said she, with a smile. She inclined her head, and then all of a sudden she glanced about her, as if looking for the shade of her dear poet that she had invoked. Her glance fell upon me. "You love Dorat? then, welcome, my friend. If Dorat was not a poet in his works, he was in his life."—"Ah, marchioness, you may as well say, in his amours."—"As you please, chevalier." At this moment the marchioness pushed aside her screen, and put her smelling-bottle to her nose. "They speak of their philosophers," she remarked contemptuously, "of such philosophers as Helvetius and Diderot. Take my word for it, Dorat was much more of a philosopher than either of them; he died like a Grecian sage."—"That's true," says the chevalier, "but he did not live like one."—"A good death, above all, chevalier; wisdom, I fancy, does not consist in living wisely. What think you? I am as obstinate as the devil; more than half a century, a horrible half century, full of tempests and storms, has passed without carrying me away with it. I have held my ground. I have

remained faithful to my generation, faithful to my remembrances, faithful to my amours; my friends may laugh and say what they please; they have laughed at my ridiculous old notions, just as if they had none of their own. Is it not so, chevalier? Ring, Zoe, if you please; I am hungry; besides, my friend, the bishop's secretary, has arrived."

We entered one of the most coquettish-looking dining-halls imaginable, covered with the most magnificent tapestries, representing various rustic scenes: wood-nymphs drinking at a fountain, hunting ladies that had strayed away, a young shepherdess in a revery, the retirement of Colinette. Two small rosewood sideboards adorned with antique porcelain, two gilded stands, two Venice mirrors, a various collection of Sevres china; this was about the whole of the furniture. I will not describe the supper, in order to conclude and not to offend modern Amphitryons; it was a little supper of the olden time, that was all. The bishop's secretary, who was a grandson of a cousin of the marchioness, was awaiting us in the dining-room reading the *Gazette de France*. "Always buried in your newspaper," said the marchioness, with contempt; "what is the subject now, if you please? Is it about Mehemet-Ali, or Thiers, or Lamartine? I do not know such folks at all. What are they playing at the *Comédie-Française*." —"*La Camaraderie*."—"I do not understand that word; it is no doubt an imitation of the *Prôneurs* of Dorat. Your gazettes do not know what they are talking about; the journal of Dorat, ah, that was a journal! After supper, while the chevalier plays a game of backgammon with my cousin, you and I, at our ease, will talk over the history of Dorat."

After supper, we returned to the bedchamber. The chevalier and the secretary took their places over their game in one corner; the marchioness remained for an instant in thought, and somewhat sad: she was reviving her recollections; she was retracing, with a trembling step, all the golden holydays of her youth; she was catching, with a failing grasp, at the shadow of all the chimeras of her heart. "Oh, how far I am from all that!" she said with a sigh; "I may well stretch out my arms, I grasp only death! At any rate, I have some consolation in talking about the past, even when I have no listener."—"Well, madame, speak of the good old times; I will listen with religious reverence; tell me particularly of Dorat, of Dorat and his five mistresses, of whom he has sung so well."—"Recollect, my dear sir, that in the best edition of his poetical works, the five mistresses are reduced to three; but, however, there are some others about whom he has not sung, but whom he loved." The marchioness cast down her eyes with the ingenuousness of fourscore. The moment had arrived for turning over the leaves of that old book, as the chevalier had observed; I had already shaken off the dust. "I am listening, marchioness; you know by heart the history of Dorat; I beg that you will relate that history to me, unless you wish to condemn me to read it in some miserable biography."—"Alas, my young friend, it is a history that comes too near home to me; how shall I relate to you, how . . . After all, another confessor, more or less. Ah, there, chevalier, don't be eaves-dropping. As for you, poet, forgive my jargon and my sins."

II.

"First of all, I must tell you my adventures; my adventures, for I rather pique myself upon having had adventures of the heart at any rate. I entered the world through marriage, a bad-enough entrance, is it not? But you do not know anything about it. At the end of two years and a half (I counted it to a day), the marquis, my husband, died. I clung to this new misfortune, for fear of a worse. My regrets were not very lively, for the marquis had taken the trouble to come into the world, and to go out of it again: that was all. He left behind him nothing to be remembered by, either by man or woman, except his brilliant talk, a curious collection of what had belonged to a little mistress of his, and a will in my favor, bequeathing me a fortune of a hundred thousand francs a year. That was the best thing he could have done, however. Poor man! Fancy, I was sincere in marrying him! It was my determination to love him, but he had nothing to love! As the wind of fashion took the direction of philosophy just at that time, he resolved upon imagining himself a philosopher. In consequence, he tormented me with his philosophic observations; he tyrannized over me with his systems, and wearied me, as Monsieur Jourdain says, '*par raison demonstrative.*'—I had my best to do to love him. Tired at last of the struggle, I set myself to hating him. He never seemed to mind it, philosopher as he was: the philosopher is prepared for every event. Notwithstanding, when he found that I pushed philosophy too far, he

fretted to such a degree as to fall ill. I do not know very well why he died, by system perhaps. I moistened his will with my tears, and I veiled my face with solemn-looking crape, through which I could see the cheerful horizon of widowhood. I had forgotten to tell you that at that time I had a face sufficiently handsome to make the amorous desperately in love, and my rivals desperately jealous; so when the time arrived for laying aside my mourning widow's cap, I had by no means the intention of burying myself in a convent. I re-entered the world through a folding door wide open; but, alas! the world, the horizon of which is so attractive, lost much of its attraction when viewed close by. The generation of 1775 was a degenerate race. I joined at least twenty circles in society, without finding one of the least value. What had become of love, intellect, and grace? Those folks took good care not to have any. And still the women of that day spoke of *the adorable*. The English called these adorables, *apes!* That was more to the purpose; it is true that in those days we called these English, *bears!* Yes, apes, for they aped the English and the philosophers: indeed, it was not worth the trouble! Notwithstanding, they did not get rid of that style of exaggeration, devoid of imagination, that insipid jargon, that mental culture corrupted by the vices of the heart, that they had inherited from their fathers. But, instead of liveliness, our adorables were only remarkable for their lifelessness. They had a kind of stupid obstinacy on behalf of all human absurdities, so that at the least dispute, they would fight like English fighting-cocks, much to the amusement of the spectators. I saw that there

was not much to be done in the way of love; and, as a woman can not live without illusions, I had recourse to music, painting, poetry. I scrawled, I daubed, I made a racket. It was about this time the *Kisses* of Dorat fell in my way. I was in raptures with this poem, without knowing why, doubtless because, as the poet himself has said, it was the road to our love. I wrote him a somewhat clever letter, though tolerably long, which you will find, if I remember rightly, in his journal, somewhat touched up. The first time I got a glance of Dorat, was at the royal fêtes at Fontainebleau. At first sight, I did not think him either good or bad looking, but by degrees I discovered a charming sweetness, that I can not describe, in his looks, a delicacy and gentle sadness, through a graceful disguise of light-heartedness and carelessness. He at first pleased me; he soon won my affections. His forehead was noble, his smile was infinitely graceful; with a little more artlessness, it would have been the smile of love. Contemplation sat often upon his forehead, but deep thought never. He was the summary of all his works, but he was still more sweetly gentle to listen to than to read.

I had had as yet only a glimpse of him. I saw him soon at a ball given by Madame d'Angeville. I was in raptures with the ball; a ball is the first tempter of woman. There reigns there, a forgetfulness of one's self and others, that enchants me, or rather did enchant me, for I must now speak of the past. Well, I was in the full intoxication of the fête, when Dorat passed by me. He had addressed to me three amiable words, I answered him with two smiles and a half. The words and the smiles were

not lost on either side; the people about me were in our way. "Madame," exclaimed he with an air of vexation, which delighted me, "shut your door, I pray, that I may converse with you at my ease." This was in truth the first time I had met in the world with a man of mind; so I listened to him with my whole heart. I only recall this, in order to give you a clearer idea of my dear poet, or if you will, to delude my heart once again, with the pleasing remembrance of that meeting. His name was Claude, like my husband, he had besides another name, Joseph, but this Joseph had not allowed his brothers to sell him, nor had he lost his coat. He was born in Paris, in 1734. His father, a native of Limousin, was auditor of accounts. His family for a long time devoted to the law, wished him to enter the bar. After some success at college, he put on the robe and wig; but they did not suit his jolly, handsome face, which seemed to require the sun, love, and adventures. He soon abandoned his brief, he made himself a bold dragoon in spite of all the world, except a pretty little creature of his neighborhood, that had enticed him. Once a bold dragoon, things went on finely. But, as the Marquis de Pezay has so well said: "Stolen kisses are the least sweet." His pretty neighbor proved false; she pretended to ward off his attacks, and when she saw that her dragoon, instead of giving her his hand, had only given her his heart, she went in search of an old aunt of Dorat's, an outrageous Jansenist, to whom she made known the great feat at arms of her nephew, the dragoon. The old aunt, alarmed by what she had heard, promised the young girl to pray for her. "Is that all you

can do for me then, madame?" The old Jansenist summoned the criminal to her court of piety: "My poor child, for the love of God, do not continue any longer a dragoon, for a dragoon was never known to have been saved." Dorat did his best to persuade her that Heaven had intended him for a bold dragoon, that he only wanted time to become a marshal of France. His old aunt was inflexible, and as she had plenty of money, which was more persuasive than herself, Dorat resigned, and composed some verses to console himself. Do you know the subject of his first verses? Misfortune. What an inconsistency! He entered the world at the age of eighteen with the most charming cortege, and behold him raving about misfortune, when the Chloes, Zulmis, and Themiras, were waiting in crowds at his door!

"Dorat did not remain long on the high road to Parnassus, where he had lost his way. He wrote one or two tragedies, but tragedy was then, according to a saying of Diderot, the antechamber of poetry: it was necessary to pass through that. Dorat soon set himself to sighing heroics; he put into rhyme, without losing his breath, the amorous complaints of, I do not know how many miserable doves; he softened all hearts but his own. He however tried his literary fortune with a tragedy, *Zulica*, which was the most beautiful failure in the world. Crébillon the Tragic (as he was called), had taken the play under his wing, and had retouched the fifth act according to his own notion. 'Ah! how intoxicated I was,' said Dorat, 'I already beheld my play elevated to the skies, I heard the applause, I aspired to nothing less

than immortality. The fatal day arrives, it was the touch of the wand that turns the gardens of Armida into a desert. My four acts were, however received with great enthusiasm: but Crébillon's act was terribly hissed. Alas! the charm had vanished, and the temple of fame was closed for ever against me.'

"He wished to revenge himself for this defeat by his *Théagène et Chariclée;* but this turned out still worse. This play did not meet with the same notorious failure; it fell in silence. Dorat bore the failure with a great deal of philosophy. He gayly made known to the world that he renounced for ever the honors of the sublime, for the kisses of lyric verse. In fact, from that day, he gracefully gave way to an easy humor, and wandered about the island of Love, in the gay company of Pleasure and the merrymakers, Cupid and the Graces. It might be said that he was the personification of Spring in the empire of Venus. Beneath his steps, there bloomed every year, the flowers of love and poetry. What bouquets! what garlands! what crowns! what fugitive poetical epistles! what gossamer-like fictions! what kisses full of fire! Never had the muse Erato been so worshipped, and such incense offered to her. On every occasion he scattered his flowers with a profuse hand. He celebrated at the same time, queens and shepherdesses, marchionesses and actresses, philosophers and comets. What delightful raillery! what gossamer talk! what charming coloring! but above all, what a charming air of graceful indifference! One evening he enters his lodging in a gay humor, humming one of Rameau's airs; he finds the Marquis de Pezay bending, with an air of gravity, over a large

folio volume. 'What the devil are you doing there, my good fellow?'—'I have become ambitious since the morning,' answers the marquis, 'I wish to rule France, nothing more nor less.'—'Indeed!' replies Dorat; 'but I have caught your ambition also, I wish to reach'—'What?' . . . Dorat reflected a moment, 'the heart of the little Julia of the Italian opera.' The two friends spent two hours in preparation. As they went about it in earnest, both of them reached the point proposed. Pezay gave some lessons on tactics to Louis XVI., who appointed him chief inspector of the coast, with a salary of three hundred thousand francs. He was so high at court, that the ministers were obliged to use his hotel as an antechamber to the throne. It was through him that Necker was advanced; so in fact he nearly governed France. 'It is a comedy that will end worse than my tragedies,' Dorat gayly remarked to him. In fact the Marquis de Pezay, banished to his estate of Blois, died there of a broken heart. As for Dorat, you will excuse my telling you how he took by assault the heart of the little Julia. 'Alas!' wrote he to the marquis, 'there was not a very valiant defence.'

"Dorat lived the dissipated life of all the men of talent about town, of his day; he was a pillar of the theatre, a poet of the *petits soupers*, the spoiled child of the opera-girls. He cast to the winds his love, his talent, and his money. When did he find time for writing? In the morning, as soon as he arose, he went the round in undress, of all the visits and the bedchamber receptions that were in the fashion; in the evening he was seen everywhere where pleasure was to be found. You must not suppose that our

poet made his verses, as M. Jourdain did his prose, without pain or labor. He had the air of throwing them out by the wayside, like the roses that bloom; but in truth, he gathered kisses easier than he did rhymes. One night I had remained by mistake at his apartments, I believe it was a severe frosty night. You suppose, perhaps, that he kept me company? By no manner of means; the poor poet had a madrigal to compose for that foolish Marchioness de Beaumont, with whom he had a rendezvous for the morning, somewhere, I know not where. Toward morning, having awakened all alone in my solitude, I went to his study, from the window of which I saw a light. I entered in silence, and surprised him in the very heat of inspiration: eight verses and a half of the madrigal were already written, he only wanted a rhyme for *onde*. 'Blonde,' said I. He turned his head, quite astonished at this new rhyming dictionary. 'Is it you, marchioness? You have taken me in my weakness by surprise, but forgive these diseases of a poet, who, thanks to you, has neither rhyme nor reason.'—'I give you the rhyme, and you won't receive it.'—'Alas! you know very well that Madame Beaumont is *brune*.'—'Well then, *ronde*.'—'Mischievous one, you know very well, that she is as thin as a skeleton, enough to frighten one.'—'Well then, *l'autre monde*.'—'Excellent, but unfortunately, it is a madrigal not an epigram that I want. You know that she has undertaken to get the favor of the court in behalf of my journal. Besides, I am indebted to her, perhaps, for having had a piece played at Fontainebleau.'

"The next morning, Dorat had finished his madri-

gal, but he was apparently quite overcome. The Marquis de Saint-Marc came to visit him in the morning. 'My God, what have you been doing last night? How pale you are!' To tell you the truth, I took pity upon the poor poet, I approached the marquis, and said to him with a trembling voice: "You are very indiscreet, Monsieur de Saint-Marc.'—'Madame, I do not doubt it,' replied the marquis, with somewhat of an impertinent air.

"This poor Marquis de Saint-Marc, lived to a good old age also, he was a disciple of Dorat. Eight days before his death, he wrote me a charming letter, which was for me the last flower of the eighteenth century, a flower somewhat faded, it is true, but how could it be otherwise? I am an aged shepherdess; my shepherd's crook looks like the spindle of the Fates. Oh, could I but tie some rose-colored ribands to my crook!

"Dorat, who knew how to let off an epigram, was the butt of more than one malevolent shot; but he held his own. His books were filled with an incredible quantity of most beautiful vignettes.* Thus a single edition of his fables, cost him more than a hundred and fifty thousand francs, for the engravings of Marillier and d'Eisen, which are masterpices of their kind. But in spite of the pictures, the book did not sell. But that which hurt the poor author of the fables the most, was the well-known insolence of an Englishman, who entered the shop of Dorat's publisher, paid down, without attempting to cheapen it,

* *Apropos* to the beautiful engravings of his books, some abbé remarked at a saloon: "Ce poete se sauve du naufrage de *planche en planche.*"

the price of the book, cut out all the engravings, and went away without saying a word, leaving the fables behind him. To conclude, about these engravings, I will tell you that Dorat went to such an extreme of childishness, in a letter he wrote to the empress of all the Russias, as to clothe his loves in the fur of Astracan, without counting the tail-piece which is at the end of the epistle, and which represents these loves riding in sleighs.

"He formed some distinguished friendships; Voltaire, who feared him, treated him as one great power does another, much better than he did the king of Prussia. The nobility sought his society on account of his talent, literary men in consequence of his attractions as a man of distinction, the women for his gallantry. There was frequently a social gathering in his handsome apartments in the Rue d'Enfer; it was a miniature hotel Rambouillet, where the Academy was laughed at, and where Parnassus was metamorphosed into the island of Paphos. Scandal was talked there about the whole world, about Voltaire, Madame Dubarry, the king of Prussia, and Mademoiselle Clairon. Fréron, whose mind was by no means at the end of his pen, went there for repose, or rather to gather material for his gazette; Monsieur Lemierre went there to read his tragedies, but it was preaching in the desert; the Marquis de Pezay, and the Marquis de Saint-Marc, added to the amusement by their sallies of wit; Crébillon the Gay did not waste his time there. Colardeau and Gilbert, a couple of sad poets, were occasionally to be found there; Marmontel, a prose poet; the young Fontanes, and the young

Fréron, two tender wet-nurses of the young muses, besides some others, who have not taken the trouble of inscribing their names upon the great volume of posterity.

"He had at the same time a great many enemies; as I told you, never did a poet have to endure so many epigrams. But, in compensation, how many sweet epistles and charming letters did Love carry to him every morning under his wings of fire! After his death, they did not cease burning them for eight days. There is something left still. Thus, this pretty description of Gilbert's, which describes having seen, during a walk on Parnassus, a poet fast asleep on a bed of roses, guarded by the Graces:—

> "When a mortal is seen with the Graces about,
> That mortal is Dorat, without any doubt.

"Dorat answered all the epigrams by a stroke of wit or a smile. With La Harpe matters went further; thus you will find in the *Année littéraire*, that Dorat speaks of the aforesaid La Harpe in the following terms: 'I deny as false what that ill-tempered, miserable, little gazetteer imputes to me in his last rag of a newspaper. There are some quick-tempered persons, who think that such an outrageous simpleton deserves a severe castigation. Bah! we laugh at a dwarf who stands on tiptoe in order to lengthen himself out, and when he annoys us we get rid of him with a snap of the finger.' This little paragraph deserved in return a volley of blows; the whole Academy thought so; but La Harpe, who could only defend himself with his pen, bore it like a philosopher. Only after the death of Dorat, he

recriminated at his ease: may the Academy forgive him!

"Notwithstanding, our poor Dorat, that I had almost lost sight of, was, as far as fortune was concerned, without resource. His success at the theatre had cost him dear. He was the first, who had the idea of paying for the applause of the pit, and the smiles of the boxes. There was more than one small celebrity in fashion, who made as good a living in this business as in any other. Thus, after each success, the saying of the Dutch after the battle of Malplaquet, was applied to Dorat: 'Another victory and we are ruined.' He suffered that gilded misery which is the worst kind of miseries. Gilbert was not more desolate in his garret than Dorat in his grand hotel. In spite of his creditors, the critics, and the epigrams, in spite of death, which was already at his threshold, he pursued with vigor, as if to delude himself, his adventures and his profession of poet. Madame de Beauharnais was his last folly, not to say anything about his epic poem, nor Mademoiselle Fannier, of the *Comédie-Française*, whom he had married under the rose. As soon as I heard that he was dying, I forgot the fickle poet; I only remembered the poet who had loved me. I flew to him. He was the same *petit-maître*, without care; the same bantering, smiling creature. He sprung to my arms. 'I have been expecting you a long time,' said he, with a cheerful air and a somewhat foolish expression. He wished still to struggle with love; he was gallant, but with his lips only; he was a wornout player, wishing to play his part of the lucky poet to the last. Alas! when I went to see

him again, he was no longer struggling with love. 'Marchioness,' said he, stretching out to me his parched, feverish hand, 'you see me struggling with death. I yesterday had a visit from the curé, who said as he went away that he would return. It is not worth while, I told him, for I shall soon be gone.'

"It was with pain that I looked upon the poor poet. He was reclining upon his couch, in his morning gown and slippers. 'Ah, there you are,' said he, in rising with difficulty, 'I expect some visiters; Madame Beauharnais, Madame d'Angeville, and Madame *Death*. If I am not mistaken, I have two hours longer to live; I have hardly time to dress.' He called his valet, he begged me to wait and he then was assisted to his dressing-room.

"When he returned, his little *salon* was full of visiters; he bowed to them as he leaned upon his valet, and then took his seat. Every one observed the elegance of his last toilet; he was never more carefully wigged, powdered, nor more finely dressed. 'What is the cause of this unusual display?' asked the Marquis de Saint-Marc, hiding his grief; 'there is some mysterious intrigue behind all this.'—'You do not know, then,' said Dorat, assuming a cheerful air, 'that I have some acquaintance with Madame *Death?* I do not say it to slander her, but she requires less urging than some others. Her messenger, that is to say the doctor, told me that she would come for me this afternoon; you will see that I will not have to wait long. I have retained the gallant habit of being always the first at a rendezvous.'

"The Marquis de Saint-Marc could not restrain a deep sigh. Every lady present turned away to con-

ceal her tears; the young Fréron wept by himself in a corner. But the deep grief of Mademoiselle Fannier, the comic actress, who had just arrived, was more bitter than mine. She threw herself, pale and overwhelmed with grief, into the arms of Dorat. 'You have done my heart good,' he said, with a smile, 'but you have disturbed my wig.' These were, I believe, his last words; he died an instant after, with heroic indifference."

III.

In finishing the history of Dorat, the marchioness gave a deep sigh, and wiped away a tear, as she looked upon one of the medallions of her bracelet. I leaned toward her from a feeling of curiosity.—"It is Dorat," said she; "look."—It was, indeed, Dorat, with his light smile of raillery.

After this history, which has been related somewhat in the style of the history of some great hero, I have not much to say. I may, remark, however, that our old marchioness has been, as she was in duty bound, rather the apologist than the critic of the poet. I am not one of those who limit poetry to amatory effusions and light raillery. Poetry has a higher aim; it is more beautiful in tears than in gayety, in hymns than in songs; I prefer the true poet that seeks it in the magnificence of the heavens, or in the silence of the valley, to the poet perversely inspired, who seizes it, in spite of itself, in the crowd, in the boudoir, or in the green-room. I prefer the poet who listens to the promptings of his heart to him who listens to the empty babble of the world; in

a word, I prefer Gilbert to Dorat; but I am not one of those who would condemn *by default*, without giving them a hearing, those young birds whose gay warbling is in these times without an echo. Let us at least give a smile to the memory of those agreeable songsters, those spoiled children of the nine muses and the marchionesses. They did not know, as we do, the tenth muse, who calls herself Sadness; they never wept over the lyre of ebony; they never touched the golden harp of the great poets; but, however, it must be acknowledged that their free and easy verses, their merry songs, were not without charms. Dorat was the most celebrated of them all, thanks to a certain original manner, thanks to that tone of gallantry with which the women of the world are so much in love, to that perfumed wanton dalliance which so delighted them; thanks also, doubtless, to those twenty-two volumes of frivolities for which he is responsible. That is too many volumes by twenty-one and a half. There are flowers, always flowers, but no fruit to be gathered. In them the clever man is seen at every turn, who conceals his heart in order to laugh more at his ease at the little inconsistencies of the world, the *petit-maître* who decks off his soul as he does his person with a thousand baubles. His language is brilliant, somewhat, however, forced in its attempts at grace, approaching too nearly a kind of jargon, a style that sometimes pleases the eye, but never carries with it the heart. His twenty-two volumes are a confused and profane medley of tragedies, comedies, heroic verse, epistles, tales, poems, fables, songs, stanzas, and romances. Voltaire himself was not more universal.—"What will be Dorat's place

on Mount Parnassus?" some one asked Voltaire.—"Dorat," said the aged philosopher, "will be the glow-worm of Parnassus!"

The tragedies of Dorat are serious trifles. Diderot had given him in vain, sage advice, recorded by Grimm. Dorat saw the Romans through the medium of the eighteenth century. He took nothing from history save the names of his characters, which he disfigured at his pleasure. Thus the best criticism on his tragedies is to be found in the engraving of Regulus, where Eisen has represented the genius of Rome as a French *petit-maître*. With more life and intrigue, his comedies might have succeeded; they are pleasant little scenes, sketches of the manners of the times. There, at least, Dorat was at home. These have certainly grace, wit, and prettiness; they have clever satire; in fact, they are everything but comedy. I will say nothing about his heroic verse, for in fact there is nothing to be said. His epistles, which belong to the school of Voltaire, with a more delicate turn, but with less spirit, are almost always worthy of his master. His tales are of no account; Dorat was always too much on his guard to write a good tale. His tales, like his fables, do not remind us of La Fontaine. He warbled a few drinking-songs; he cultivated a great number of madrigals, which had great notoriety, and bloomed as long as the roses; he babbled about some fancy of his heart, and called it writing a romance. Finally, he turned into rhyme some wearisome poems, for example, the *Kisses*, the *Month of May*, the *Turtle-Doves of Zulmis*. Love should have played an important part in these poems, but all that is to be found is the super-

annuated Cupid of the ancients. In his poems, however, there are some charming figures, after the manner of Ovid, Sannazar, and Passerat; some pretty love-scenes which remind us of the kissing scenes of Johannes Secundus and Jean Vander-Does; finally, some delicious pictures, such as used to be said no one but Dorat, Boucher, or Watteau, could have imagined.

Dorat was born to sing like a bird in the grove; but the poor bird, early fledged, hardly ever sang upon a single solitary leafy branch amid the holy harmony of the valleys. He sung, however; but it was a never-ending *aria* upon the rain, fine weather, the portrait of Zulmis, the birthday of Zuléma; in a word, it was the gazette in verse of the follies of the day. He sang for every one, on every subject. Thus, for *Mademoiselle* * * *, *who said*, *laughingly*, *that I should pass the night with her*. It is true that we should sing at any rate. Every morning he crowned his frivolous muse with flowers, which fell faded to the ground at night.

Dorat and Gilbert, who were attached to each other, heart and mind, died at the same period, both of them quite young, the one surrounded with the full train of a *petit-maître*, the other surrounded by the wretched misery of an hospital; the one died of pleasure, the other of hunger. Dorat with more philosophy in his heart; Gilbert with more poetry in his soul; Dorat after having listened to the vain seductions of the world; Gilbert, after having listened to the vain seductions of pride, which led him on to death through a path sown with tears; the first, amidst his friends and his mistresses, upon a gilded

arm-chair, while saying those memorable last words: "*Fannier, you have done my heart good, but you have disturbed my wig!*" the second, without a friend and without a mistress, stretched upon an hospital bed, uttering this sublime cry:—

> Welcome the fields I love, and you, glorious pastures,
> And you, the smiling exile of the grove.....!

Well, of these two poet-friends, who presented such a contrast in the eighteenth century, who of the two was, I will not say the greatest, but the most happy? Gilbert, Gilbert, who lived within his own soul, and who took his time to descend into the depths of his own heart!

We can say of Dorat what St. Theresa said of the devil: "*Wretched one! he never knew love!*"—It is love which makes the poet, for love is the tripod whence he looks into the infinite.

ABBÉ TRUBLET:

ONE OF THE FORTY,* A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

Hitherto I have painted those heads that are crowned with the rays of heaven; in seeking in the shade, I see the forgotten ones gradually appear, who lift their shrouds to ask a remembrance from the historian of literature. Why not bring to life, for an hour, the poor Abbé Trublet—one of the forty—who has slept so soundly in a shroud made of the paper of his own works, under this epitaph of Voltaire:—

> To eke his little wit out, good old soul!
> From all he met some little wit he stole.

The Abbé Trublet was celebrated in the eighteenth century, for making a fool of himself.

The Abbé Trublet was a fool for three reasons, and for more reasons besides: he wished at all hazard to pass for a man of genius, and he only made himself ridiculous; he wished at all hazards—for twenty-five years—to become a member of the Academy, and he did become a member of the Academy; he wished at all hazards to be successful

* Members of the Academy.

in love adventures, and he only succeeded in being loved by his servant Colinette, "burdened with fifty-one springs." Moreover, he was born at St. Malo. Well, to be born at St. Malo was already one step toward celebrity. He was born there a canon, and died there an archdeacon.

Before going farther, I will give you his portrait, as drawn by Madame Geoffrin: "He is a fool, polished up with some talent; in truth, he has picked up some of the foam of talent everywhere." It is known that Madame Geoffrin, who had a fashion of saying very piquant things about literature and the fine arts, used to say that men were made up out of various small pots; a pot of genius, a pot of imagination, a pot of reason, and, finally, out of a large pot of pure folly. Destiny, for a mere pastime, took what she pleased from each of these pots, and thus made the brains of men. One day of good humor, Destiny, wishing to bring into the world an Abbé Trublet, only made use of the big pot; afterward, thinking that she had taken too much out of this pot, she uncovered the little pot of genius, which is always boiling, and which, consequently throws up a foam; well, Destiny, trying to take something out of this pot, only caught hold of some froth, with which she besmeared the substance of the pure folly of the Abbé Trublet. With this fine privilege bestowed by Destiny, the Abbé Trublet was, notwithstanding, the ugliest man in all the kingdom; ugliness is generally where it exists quietly presumed; his was proverbial.

After having completed his studies, he became a lacquey of Fontenelle and De la Motte, that is to

say, that he went everywhere distributing their witty sayings, without forgetting a single full stop or comma. He fancied that he would thus become celebrated, by relating everywhere, with great precision, how La Motte took a pinch of snuff, and Fontenelle wiped his nose. When he entered a *salon*, it was always expected that he would say this or something like it: "To-day, at half-past two, M. de Fontenelle put his feet on the fender, he shook off the snuff that had fallen upon his ruffles, he stirred the fire, but I saw nothing but the sparks of his genius." And then the Abbé Trublet would relate, word for word, what Fontenelle had said, always ending with this phrase: "Monsieur de Fontenelle was condescendingly charming and agreeable to me." One day, Madame de Lambert, wearied with the obstinate determination of the Abbé Trublet to make a babbling parrot of himself, remarked to him, with a graceful cruelty: "The Abbé Trublet is a ledger, with a double entry; Monsieur de Fontenelle fills the column of receipts, and the abbé that of expenses."

In spite of his ugliness and his melancholy face, the Abbé Trublet was received in certain *salons* where wit circulated. He was even attached to the Cardinal de Tencin, who was of no service to him, for the abbé, in his turn, was of no great service to the cardinal. He followed the cardinal to Rome, became tired of it, and returned to Paris. By hearing literature, morals, and philosophy, talked of, and as he had a good memory, he succeeded in sewing together, patch by patch, leaf by leaf, a book on philosophy, morals, and literature. And as, after

all, this book was the joint work of some distinguished minds, it succeeded in making a noise, and sold. Intoxicated with his glory, the Abbé Trublet bought two sleeve ruffles, and every week wore one of these upon the hand with which he took snuff. Everything was smiling then; Fontenelle, who had never invited any one to dinner, kept the abbé one day to dine with him; it is true that the abbé dined wretchedly, but to dine with Fontenelle, that was something that had never been before known.

It was then that the Abbé Trublet knocked at the door of the Academy, and he was told to call again. In order to console him for his unsuccessful efforts, his native town made him an archdeacon. He reappeared in triumph in his own land, flattering himself that he had thus given the lie to the proverb. He preached and confessed in the style of the philosophers of his day, and thought that he agitated all the hearts and turned all the heads. I here quote, relative to this, a passage from a letter of D'Alembert to Voltaire: "The Abbé Trublet boasts of having made, in past times, a great many conquests, by means of the confessional. He told me one day, that in preaching to the women in the town, he had succeeded in turning all their heads; I answered him, 'Yes, turning them away.'"

However, at St. Malo, the Abbé Trublet had no longer any genius, simply for the reason that he never heard there the conversation of men of genius. He returned to live in Paris, where he found wherewithal to write another volume on literature, morals, and philosophy. "I will try," said he, one evening, "to publish a new volume every six months." The

Abbé de Cannaie, who was somewhat malicious, answered: "That depends upon the people you may meet."

Maupertuis pretended with a serious air, that this book of the abbé Trublet had such a repute in Germany, that the postmasters refused horses to all travellers who had not read it. It is in this famous book that the Abbé Trublet has written a dissertation worthy of descending to posterity. This dissertation was written to find out the causes of the weariness produced by the reading of the *Henriade*. He who had such an idea is immortal by right; so the Academy, which had hitherto said to this great man: "Call again in twenty-five years," now said to him: "Call again in twenty years."

Voltaire expressed his gratitude on various occasions to this licensed weigher of fly's eggs in scales of spiders' web. The *poor devil* has done well to take upon himself the task of handing down this great name to posterity; it is, I think, the best letter of recommendation for the Abbé Trublet to immortality.

Having exhausted every resource, he returned to St. Malo, where he passed nearly all the remainder of his life. He was never a long time absent from Paris. He went there firstly, in order to listen, and secondly to pay his visits to the Academy. Every vacation, he arrived by the coach, he went to offer his grotesque person to the Academicians, did not obtain a seat, and returned with patience, repeating to himself the sacred words: "Knock, and it shall be opened to you." He made fifty visits to the Marshal de Richelieu.—"I persist," he used to say, in presenting himself. "I resist," invariably

answered the marshal. His obstinacy afforded a great deal of amusement. Every one laughed at it. If it was desired to refer to some very distant time, it used to be said: "It was at the time when the Abbé Trublet offered himself to the Academy."—Piron amused his friends a great deal with this fool of an Abbé Trublet. One day, as he was looking out of the window, as he lived opposite to Fontenelle, he saw a funeral procession coming out of the house of the centenary poet: "Admirable! Now for some more visits for the Abbé Trublet!"—He shut his window, made his pen, and wrote immediately to the Abbé Trublet to come in all haste :—

"There are only thirty-nine; their president, who was only a hundred years old, is dead. Come, then, you are expected. Fontenelle's seat comes to you by right, to you who have listened to Fontenelle for so long a time."

The Abbé Trublet abandons his flock: he arrives by the coach as usual, with a discourse on Fontenelle; he proceeds to thank the wag Piron. Whom does he meet? M. de Fontenelle, who was on his way to preside at the Academy!—"Well, then, my dear canon, is there a place vacant at the Academy?"—"Alas!" answers the poor abbé, in regarding Fontenelle from head to foot, "it must be confessed, that that rogue of a Piron is a wicked joker!"

Piron had written in good faith; the funeral that he had seen depart was that of the celebrated Monsieur Daube, Fontenelle's nephew. Piron naturally had taken it into his head, that the uncle, a hundred years old, had departed before his nephew, who was only fifty.

At Madame d'Epinay's, Grimm, Duclos, Helvetius, and Diderot, amused themselves a long time with composing the romance of the Abbé Trublet. There were pictures, portraits, grotesque enough to make one die of laughing. They imagined, that offering himself to the Academy at each vacation, he had always forty eulogiums all written in the hope of succeeding one of the forty, so that as soon as he missed getting a vacancy, he returned to St. Malo, to compose, between the duties of the pulpit and the confessional, a new eulogium on him who had got the last seat. These gentlemen wished to push the joke so far as to pretend that he had dropped his portfolio on the road to St. Malo, and to get it printed. But this was a joke that would cost too much labor, for it was nothing less than writing in the abbé's style forty funeral addresses upon the forty living academicians. This, however, would have been a very piquant joke for all the world, especially for the members of the Academy. There should have been written at the head of each eulogium: *In case I succeed Monsieur such-a-one.*

After forty journeys by the coach, the Abbé Trublet entered the Academy, without saying beware, to the great astonishment of the Academicians themselves. The queen, affected by the patience of the abbé, as much as by her zeal for religion, begged the President Hénault to open the doors of the sanctuary to her protégé. The President Hénault formed a little cabal, with great secrecy; everything proceeded so famously that the abbé was elected. Voisenon observed, not altogether with the intention of flattering the Academy, that the abbé did not seem to be so much of a fool there as elsewhere!

Would it be believed? He had no sooner become a member of the Acadamy, than with his usual penetration, he found out that it was not worth so much trouble after all. He became wearied and disgusted with literary distinction. The Academy, that appeared to him at a distance, with its thousand seductive attractions, like a young wife that gave promise of endless delights, seemed soon nothing more to him than a quarrelsome loquacious old woman. Not able to endure it any longer, he left it abruptly; he abandoned, as Grimm says, the theatre of his suffering and his triumph. He returned to St. Malo, where he lingered for five years, never ceasing to repeat: "I am, however, an archdeacon and an academician."

At last God did him the favor of taking him to heaven, in the month of March of the year 1770. At the present moment, the Abbé Trublet is in purgatory, by the side of his friend Fontenelle, listening and copying, as he did while here on earth; at least so Voltaire predicted.

The Abbé Trublet was the registrar and the *chiffonnier* of literature for nearly half a century. By sifting through his memory other people's wheat, he has preserved with the dust and tares, some grains of good corn. He sowed them all together. When the harvest had come, how many there were who could say to him; "This ear comes to me!"—The tares and the weeds belonged to the poor abbé. It can not be denied that here and there he shows some of the appearances of talent. He called himself as clear as amber (*ambre*); as *l'ombre* (darkness) he was told. He was often called, playing on the words, *l'abbé troublét* (the troubled abbé). In his trifling style, he

warbled like a little bird; like a little bird, he had all sorts of little pretty ways. From the pernicious school of Fontenelle, he adorned, or rather unadorned his style with all kinds of tinsel and baubles. He published a book on Fontenelle, under the title of: *The Genius of Fontenelle.* Fontenelle was no great things, if we believe this book. The Abbé Trublet, who wished to put genius in everything, believed that he had found out the genius of punctuation; he spent a great deal of time in arranging his periods, his commas, and his stops, when he wrote. If I was desirous of practising such a talent, I would conclude his history with a —!

DHELE.

A PHILOSOPHER.

He was an Englishman. He became known in France about the year 1772, under the name of Thomas Dhèle. His real name was Hales.

He was born in 1740, in the county of Gloucester. His father, a baronet, a man of a bold, adventurous spirit, wished that the only descendant of his somewhat illustrious house, should face the dangers of the sea. After a serious and studious childhood, Thomas Dhèle entered the navy. He shared bravely in the Jamaica war. He travelled all over the globe; he remained a long time in Italy, and came to Paris about the year 1770, with the remnant of his patrimony very much diminished by his travels, having, as Grétry said, received more than one kick from Bacchus and Venus. In spite of his passionate ardor for pleasure, his face always preserved a certain serenity and severe dignity, which made him almost an object of veneration. He had a fine countenance, the lines of his face recalled those portraits of the English court by Vandyke, his mouth had an expression of contemptuous indifference. At Paris,

he was not long in ruining himself entirely, who would believe it! for the mistress of the hotel where he alighted. When he found himself without resource, he commenced writing comedies for the *Théâtre-Italien*. His genius was so perfect, that his very first piece was a masterpiece, in arrangement for the stage, and in dialogue. He worked slowly, but was never willing to revise his works, saying that the judgment of the morrow was no better than the judgment of the evening before. From the *Comédie-Italienne*, he received, on an average, good and bad years, over a thousand crowns a year. But what was that for an English baronet, who, during his travels, had thrown his patrimony to the winds? During the ten years that he lived in Paris, he was never known to have lived in ease for more than three months at a time. Thanks to his recklessness, he passed his life in jail, when he did not pass it at the café. Whatever was the extreme of his poverty, the pride of his soul and dignity of his manners never forsook him. However badly dressed, his bearing showed the man of birth. Grétry, who has left some notes about Dhèle, relates that he saw him for a long time almost naked; he never inspired pity, "his noble and dignified countenance seemed to say: 'I am a man; what can I want?'" He had the pride of a Spaniard, and the calmness of an Englishman.

He was one of the best critics of his day, although he never wrote down his critical judgments. At the theatre, his decisions were without appeal. He always had a clear view of the political horizon; the editors of the journals frequently based their bets

upon his conjectures. He never spoke of himself, from a prudent regard for others, as well as from his own self-respect.

He made his début at the theatre, in conjunction with Grétry, with his play of *The Judgment of Midas.* It is a charming comedy. The original genius of Dhèle, sweetly elevated by the lively and beautiful music of Grétry, united in its favor the suffrages of all the Parisians, who found it quite pleasant to applaud the English at the Comic opera, and to damn them on the ocean. Its success was brilliant. The authors were called out; Dhèle, badly dressed enough, came on with a serious air, neither pleased nor displeased. "It is," he said, "the necessary epilogue to my comedy." As Apollo falls from the clouds in the first act, there was a wit who made the following point upon the strength of it: "Monsieur Dhèle, as your piece falls from the clouds, it is necessary for it to ascend again." The Academy, not knowing what else to do, bethought themselves of slandering the author of the words of *The Judgment of Midas.* Dhèle's only answer was the dedication of his play to the Academy.

A year after, Dhèle and Grétry, who were always on good terms, finished *l'Amour Jaloux.* The subject was suggested by an English comedy, *The Wonder.* The piece was first played at Versailles with great success. On the day of its representation, while Grétry was strutting about the palace in all his simple pride, Dhèle was simply seated over his glass in a tavern at Versailles, like a man free from all human vanity. The success of the *L'Amour Jaloux* was still greater at the *Théâtre-Italien.*

It began to be asked, who was this Englishman, sufficiently original to possess as much genius as a Frenchman. A thousand stories were told about him; there was a desire to see him in order to judge better of his eccentricities. "I only appear a singular man to them, because they are not natural. It is I who am the natural man."

The Duke of Orleans, hearing that Dhèle passed all his afternoons at the *Café du Caveau*, in the Palais Royal, disguised himself and went there to see him. He found a man there looking more serious than a Flemish beer-drinker, with his legs crossed or extended upon a chair, musing at his ease, without troubling himself about those who were about him; musing on what? Musing on love, for Dhèle was always in love. If he deigned to mingle in the conversation, he said but few words, but always to the purpose; he never took the trouble to talk about what every one ought to know; he interrupted the babblers, saying dryly: "*That is in print.*" If he approved, he did it with a nod of his head; if his patience was tried by any foolish talk, he crossed his legs tightly, took snuff, and looked away.

The Duke of Orleans was astounded. As he knew that Dhèle was in debt, he despatched, next morning, a valet with a hundred louis for him. "Tell him, that it is the first payment due of a pension that the Duke of Orleans bestows upon him for his eloquence."

The valet finds Dhèle lying on a bed that was somewhat hard, it must be confessed. "I disturb you, sir?"—"Yes."—"Are you Monsieur Dhèle?"—"Yes."—"Shall I shut the door?"—"No, for you

will stay too long talking. . ."—"Do not get angry, I am here in behalf of the Duke of Orleans."—"Well?"—"The duke sends you the first payment of a pension that his royal highness bestows upon you for your eloquence."—"It is well."—Here are a hundred louis."—"There is one for yourself."—"Is that all I shall say to the duke?"—"Yes; but . . . . be off, the Duke of Orleans is aware of my eloquence."

It will be easily believed that in three or four months after, he had not a sou left. Grétry had received from the Duke of Orleans, at whose palace the *Judgment of Midas* had just been played, a hundred louis to divide with Dhèle. Grétry wrote to Dhèle, sending him his share; he gave his answer to the domestic: *It is all right.* Grétry somewhat vexed at not receiving an answer to his letter, expected that Dhèle would speak of it himself in person; but he met him twenty times, without any allusion being made to it. Finally, he could not help speaking to him, himself: "You received, no doubt . . ."—"Yes."

Dhèle did not say a word more.

He was spoken of as a model of ingratitude, because he appeared to forget his benefactors in forgetting their benefits Did he forget?

One day at the *Café du Caveau*, a man to whom he was indebted for a great many loans, insulted him. "Here I am, forced to fight," said Dhèle; "it is a disease of the times." The debtor and creditor, in order to despatch matters, betook themselves to a neighboring garden. They had hardly put themselves on guard, when Dhèle, who was cool, and had

the advantage in skill, very gracefully disarmed his antagonist, and said to him with his usual gravity: "If I was not your debtor, I would kill you; if we had witnesses I would wound you; we are alone, I forgive you."

He was a prey to an unworthy mistress, a wornout opera-girl. One day, as he awoke, he saw a sheriff's officer, who bowed. "How much?" asked he. "Ten louis," answered the officer.

Dhèle rose from his bed, took his pen and wrote to Grétry:—

"Ten louis or the jail."

Grétry went with the ten louis. "Who is so troublesome, my dear Dhèle, to trouble you for such a trifle?"—"I do not know."—"You ought to know."—"What's the good?"

Grétry takes the writ with which the officer is charged. "How! it is your opera-lady again."—"Do you know what her claim is for?"—"The hire of your bed that you are lying upon."—"Not of my bed, but of hers," said Dhèle, "pay it."

During the most flourishing time of his misery, Dhèle called in upon a friend who had just gone out; he was struck with the sight of a fine pair of breeches, of a lilac-colored silk; he thought that his own had had their day. Without any ceremony, he puts on his friend's breeches, and goes away delighted with his discovery. His friend returns, and finds a rag at the foot of his bed. "My breeches! where are my breeches? Dhèle has been here . . ." But he could not believe that Dhèle would be guilty of such conduct. In the evening he goes to the *Café du Caveau*. He recognises his property at first sight.

Dhèle salutes him as usual. His friend more and more surprised, slaps in good humor, Dhèle's leg. "These are them, are they not? . . ."—"Yes," says Dhèle, in the coolest way in the world, "I had none."

Dhèle had the idea of writing a romance; he wrote one in less than a day. Not one word too much; and still it was a complete romance in conception, character, and incident. This romance of eight pages, without digression, without tedious length, and without trivialities, was a satire upon the romances of the eighteenth century; it is rather a satire upon the romances of the present day.

From sitting up late at nights, making love rather freely, breathing the air of theatres and taverns, Dhèle fell ill with a disease of the lungs. He was in a short time at Death's door. He passed almost all the month of February in his bed. In the spring he got up, and thought himself out of danger. He set to work writing plays and making love again. He had fallen in love with Signora Bianchi, who deigned to find him entertaining, who loved him, perhaps, for his simplicity. The months of April and May, were for him a whole spring-time of love. This man that was so grave, was like a child by the side of a woman, this cool Englishman loved with all the sentimental delicacy of a Frenchman. He spoke of love, as he did about everything else, without periphrasis. It was always the same brief, mute eloquence.

"Have you nothing to say, Dhèle?" asked Madame Bianchi, one evening. "I love you."—"Besides?"—"You are beautiful."—"And besides?"—"I love you."

Dhèle was right.

When the *Théâtre-Italien* was done away with the signora departed for Italy; this was the death-blow to our poor philosopher; for in the opinion of all the world, he died of love. He tried in vain to retain this charming actress in France, who had promised, in order to console him, to await him in Venice. He spent two months in trying to find enough money to take him there. Not a single charitable soul came to his aid. Grétry offered him a hundred louis, but for a comic opera that he was to write before he left. He set himself to work with too much ardor; he fell ill; after he had once taken to his bed, he did not leave it again but for his coffin.

He had by his pillow, a guide-book, and his unfinished opera. The situation of the characters of his play, had diverted him from his own situation; he thus occasionally blinded himself to his own grief, but grief held its place, and destroyed the poor sufferer. He was not willing to receive the visits of any one, in order that he might be alone with his love. Grétry, however, succeeded in entering his bedchamber at the moment of death. "Well, Dhèle?"—"Better."—"And our opera?"—"Two acts."

Dhèle fumbled over his guide-book. "What are you looking for?"—"My route."—"Where are you going to?"—"Venice."—"Is it, then, a serious passion?"—"Yes."

Dhèle who had arisen, fell back on his pillow; Grétry was struck with the sudden paleness of his face, and the stare of his eyes. "Do you want a drink?" he asked. "No."—"What do you want, my poor friend?"—"My guide-book . . . ."

At this moment Dhèle expired.

What shall I say more about this man, so strange from his very simplicity? I shall say nothing, for he would cry from his tomb: "*It is in print;*" or would, perhaps, remind me of those beautiful words of Pythagoras: "Be silent, or say something better than silence."

WATTEAU AND LANCRET.

I.

In France, for two centuries, poetry and painting, hand in hand, have always travelled together on the highway of genius, sometimes crowned with the antique laurel, sometimes with earthly roses; now severe with elevated brow, now playful and smiling. The same grandeur, the same force, the same grace, ruled both. Poussin, Lesueur, Champaigne, and Lebrun, make good pendants to Corneille, Molière, Boileau, and Racine. For La Fontaine there is none; but he was himself both poet and painter. In the eighteenth century, grandeur and simplicity disappear. Voltaire, who is only a poet through his easy grace, was born in the same time as Watteau; there is the same fire and the same caprice. Fontenelle, Gentil-Bernard, the Abbé de Bernis, Dorat, and Boufflers, are found in comparison with Lancret, Lemoine, Boucher, Baudouin, and Fragonard. Toward the end of the century, Greuze and Florian appear in the same horizon. Soon David, Prudhon, and Géricault, came to contest nobly with Marie-Joseph Chénier, André Chénier, and Châteaubriand.

At the present day, when there are a hundred poets who write at random, are there not a hundred painters who paint at a venture? The inspiration of heaven passes in the wind, in the rays of the sun, in the perfume of roses; poets and painters gather it with the same love.

In the eighteenth century, Fontenelle has held a curious paradox on inspiration; in his view it is a barometer that varies, which mounts to genius or descends to absurdity, according to the inconstancy of the weather. In support of his paradox, he instances unhealthy countries which never produce clear understandings. Thus cloudy years, full of winds and tempests, have only given birth to dull, heavy, cold understandings, always quarrelling with every one; on the contrary, fine and beautiful years, filled with roses and sunlight, have nourished those ardent imaginations which give out flashes of divine light, which cast lavishly the most beautiful flowers of art and love. Fontenelle affirms that all the geniuses of the great age have been lighted by a sun of fire, that they have grown in unclouded seasons, but here and there embellished with magnificent storms; he adds, that in the dawn of the eighteenth century, the sun was softer, the heavens brighter, the roses more prolific, never were more gardens seen in France; never had winds so light shaken in the air perfumes so intoxicating; it was a fairy time, everybody smiled, French grace became coquettish and sought the brilliancy of color. The opera, just created, enchanted all eyes. At that time in France were cradled two delicate children, destined to give the spirit and color to their age — Voltaire and Wat-

teau, who have remained, one the poet, and the other the painter of the eighteenth century.

A soul formed for poetry seeks it in the tumults of life, the joys of the world, or the silence of solitude. Under the regency, the way to solitude had been lost, poetry was to be found at the opera, in a boudoir, on the turf of a park, in a happy turn of speech, in a smile, a bunch of flowers. Poetry gave animation to amorous adventures, little suppers, wine and intoxication; the spirit of Horace had reappeared in France. If you wish to find this poetry, so despised by the lachrymose gentry of the present day, read the epistles of Voltaire, see the pictures of Watteau; it is all there, especially in the pictures. In these pretty, sparkling masterpieces, which appear to have come from another world, you may study the character of the eighteenth century; its spirit, its grace, its carelessness, its indifference to appearances, its coquettishness, its rumpled freshness; the whole eighteenth century is there, smiling upon you. Watteau had hit upon the secret of his age, unless the eighteenth century was but a copy of Watteau. Thus, for example, Louise d'Orleans gave *fêtes gallantes*, modelled on those of the painter. At a later period, Madame de Pompadour said that her mother, on her wedding-night, became lost in contemplation, by the pale light of her night-lamp, of an embarkation for Cythera, a newly-finished work of Watteau.

Antoine Watteau is a Fleming or a Frenchman, as you please. He was born at Valenciennes, when that city was in turn in the domains of Louis XIV. and of the Low Countries. But in spite of the fogs of Flan-

ders, the fumes of beer or of tobacco, the spectacle of *Kermess*, the debaucheries of the tavern, he became a thoroughly Parisian painter, a painter of gallantry, always with a happy recollection of Flemish coloring. He was born in 1684, at the time the king of France was bombarding Luxembourg. His family was poor, as a matter of course. He was put to school just long enough not to learn anything. He was never able to read and write without great difficulty, but it was not in that his strength lay. He learned early to discover genius in a picture, to copy with a happy touch the gay face of Nature. There had been painters in his family, among others a great uncle, who had died at Antwerp, without leaving any property. The father of Watteau had little leaning toward painting; but he was one of those who let men and things here below take their course. Watteau, therefore, was permitted to take his. Now Watteau was born a painter. God had given him the fire of genius, if not genius. His first master was chance, the greatest of all masters after God. His father lived in the upper story of a house with its gable-end to the street. Watteau had his nose out of the window oftener than over a book; he loved to amuse himself with the varied spectacle of the street. Sometimes it was the fresh-looking Flemish peasant-girl, driving her donkey through the market-place, sometimes the little girls of the neighborhood, playing at shuttlecock during the fine evenings. Peasant-maid and little child were traced in original lines in the memory of the scholar; he already admired the indolent *naïveté* of the one, the prattling grace of the other. He had his eye also on

some smiling female neighbor, such as are to be found everywhere; but the most attractive spectacle to him was that of some strolling troop of dancers or country-players. On fête-days sellers of elixirs, fortune-tellers, keepers of bears and rattlesnakes, halted under his window. They were sure of a spectator. Watteau suddenly fell into a profound revery at the sight of Gilles and Margot upon the stage; nothing could divert his attention from this amusement, not even the smile of his female neighbor: he smiled at the grotesque coquetries of Margot; he laughed till out of breath at the quips of Gilles. He was frequently seen seated in the window, his legs out, his head bent, holding on with difficulty, but not losing a word or a gesture. What would he not have given to have been the companion of Margot, to kiss the rusty spangles of her robe, to live with her the happy life of careless adventure? Alas! this happiness was not for him. Margot descended from the boards, Gilles again became a man as before, the theatre was taken down, Watteau still on the watch; but by degrees he became sad; his friends were departing, departing without him, with their gauze dresses, their scarfs fringed with gold, their silver lace, their silk breeches, and their jokes.—"Those people are truly happy," said he, "they are going to wander gayly about the world, to play comedy wherever they may be, without cares and without tears!"—Watteau, with his twelve-year-old eyes, saw only the fair side of life. He did not guess, be it understood, that beneath every smile of Margot there was a stifled tear. Watteau seems to have always seen with the same eyes; his glance, diverted by the ex-

pression and the color, did not descend as far down as the soul. It was somewhat the fault of his times. What had he to do while painting queens of comedy, or dryads of the opera, with the heart, tears, or divine sentiment?

After the strollers had departed, he sketched on the margins of the "Lives of the Saints" the profile of Gilles, a gaping clown, or some grotesque scene from the booth. As he often shut himself up in his room with this book, his father, having frequently surprised him in a dreamy and melancholy mood, imagined that he was becoming religious. He, however, soon discovered that Watteau's attachment to the folio was on account of the margin and not of the text. He carried the book to a painter in the city. This painter, bad as he was, was struck with the original grace of certain of Watteau's figures, and solicited the honor of being his master. In the studio of this worthy man, Watteau did not unlearn all that he had acquired, although he painted for pedlars male and female saints by the dozen. From this studio he passed to another, which was more profane and more to his taste. Mythology was the great book of the place. Instead of St. Peter, with his eternal keys, or the Magdalen, with her infinite tears, he found a dance of fauns and naiads, Venus issuing from the waves, or from the net of Vulcan. Watteau bowed amorously before the gods and demigods of Olympus; he had found the gate to his Eden. He progressed daily, thanks to the profane gods, in the religion of art. He was already seen to grow pale under that love of beauty and of glory which swallows up all other loves. On his return from

a journey to Antwerp, his friends were astonished at the enthusiasm with which he spoke of the wonders of art. He had beheld the masterpieces of Rubens and Vandyke, the ineffable grace of Murillo's *Virgins*, the ingeniously-grotesque pieces of Teniers and Van Ostade, the beautiful landscapes of Ruysdael. He returned with head bent and eyes fatigued, and his mind filled with lasting recollections.

He was not twenty when he set out for Paris with his master. The opera in its best days enlisted the aid of all painters of gracefulness. At the opera, Watteau threw the lightning flashes of his pencil right and left: mountains, lakes, cascades, forests, nothing dismayed him, not even the Camargos, whom he had for models. He ended by taming himself down to this cage of gayly-singing and fluttering birds. A dancing-girl, who had not much to do, deigned to grant the little Flemish dauber, the favor of sitting for her portrait. Fleming as he was, Watteau made the progress of the portrait last longer than the scornfulness of Mademoiselle la Montagne. This was not all: the portrait was considered so graceful in the dancing-world, that sitters came to him every day on the same terms.

He left the opera with his master, as soon as the new decorations were finished. Besides Gillot, the great designer of fauns and naiads had returned there more flourishing than ever. The master returned to Valenciennes, Watteau remained at Paris, desiring to depend upon his fortune, good or bad. He passed from the opera into the studio of a painter of devotional subjects, who manufactured St. Nicholases for Paris and the provinces, to suit the

price. So Watteau manufactured St. Nicholases. "My pencil," he said, "did penance." The opera always attracted him; there he could give free scope to all the extravagance of his fancy, to all the charming caprices of his pencil; but at the opera, his master and himself had given way to Gillot; and the latter was not disposed to give way to anybody. This is the place to narrate the little that history has gathered in reference to this painter who was *par excellence*, the national painter of grotesque subjects.

Claude Gillot was born at Langres, in 1673. Diderot, who was from the same region, ought to recall him to our recollection. Gillot had somewhat of the same turn of mind as Watteau, but was more open and more lively. He too, showed all his teeth at the farces of the strollers on the Boulevards. He had studied under Jean Corneille, but had never listened to any one's counsel but his own. His thoroughly original mind led him into innumerable blunders, but at the same time gave force and boldness to his pencil. It might be said of him pre-eminently, that he made jokes with his pencil. He painted in an off-hand manner, with strong lines and broad dashes; he had, however, in his hands the great gift of creation, his forests swayed to and fro, his fountains flowed, his figures breathed. He produced marvellous effects of light and shade, without designing to do so. A hell from his pencil, which vomited fire and flame with such truthfulness, that all the audience at the opera shrieked with terror, was long talked of. He was the best man in the world, simple-hearted, careless, always a philosopher, and always poor, enthusiastic in nothing but painting and low comedy.

He might have made his fortune at the opera, that is, if it is possible to make a fortune there, but what use was it for him to enrich himself? He would have had to count his crowns, hoard them like a miser, or lend them out like a Jew. One must have time to spare to become rich. Gillot had none too much time for his walk in the sunshine.*

II.

Watteau went to him: "I pass the best days of my life in manufacturing St. Nicholases, which have little that is catholic about them; I regret the opera, which enchanted me; can I not, therefore, with your assistance return to my rollicking satyrs, my nonchalant naiads, my gardens of Armida, and my castles in the air." Watteau feared a refusal, but Gillot soon reassured him: "You are a young fellow of talent," said he to him, "they remember you at the opera. La Montagne has told me about your pretty style of taking a portrait. You are welcome. If you have no home, come and lodge at my house. My bread, my wine, my pencil, are half yours. Forward, up the ladder like sign-painters."

Watteau recovered all his pretty fancies at the opera, not forgetting Mademoiselle la Montagne. The pagan gods and demigods became reanimated under his playful, fanciful, and fairy-like touch; but he took

* Gillot has come down to our times solely by means of his engravings. He has given a wonderfully spirited version of La Fontaine's fables. He excelled in engraving, as in painting, in ornament and grotesque pieces. His animated, playful, and picturesque graver has placed him above those, who, like Bernard Picard, sought chiefly for finished effect.

especial delight in the divinities of the woods and waters. Sirens, naiads, fauns, satyrs, hamadryads, the god Pan playing the flute among the reeds, the huntress Diana pursuing a stag; in a word, all the ravishing creations of the profane poets, enchanted the eye as they had the imagination. Gillot completely bewildered by the grace and animation which Watteau scattered about as with a fairy's wand, passed whole hours in watching him at work. Mademoiselle la Montagne, always disdainful, called upon him for a second portrait. "A second may pass," said Watteau, "but I will not take a third."

He passed from the opera to the Luxembourg, where he was summoned by Claude Audran. Audran was the most celebrated of all decorative painters, but if a figure was wanted among the garlands and festoons he could do nothing. He thought with reason that the rapid hand of Watteau would be a great help to him; Watteau scattered here and there among the ornaments, ravishing allegorical figures; Cupid, Silenus, Diana, the Graces, Music, Painting, Poetry, groups of shepherds, *Fêtes Champêtres et Galantes*. In spite of all these slight masterpieces, he had as yet neither reputation nor ready money; but after all he was no longer to be pitied, he lived in a palace, dined every day, and went to refresh himself in the evening by a little stroll with his friend Gillot. Moreover, he painted at the Luxembourg, by the side of the works of Rubens and Vandyke. "The opera has spoiled me," he said; "I had a Flemish genius; I have still good color, but what have I made of my natural gifts? I have a mania for being witty everywhere, even in my landscapes. I have painted the

three Graces too many times to paint a woman well." He spoke in this way on seeing the works of the great masters, but when his glance returned to his own paintings, he smiled with pride at the admirable fancies of his original genius. "Who knows?" he added, "who knows?"

He became homesick, and desired again to see the gables of Valenciennes, the paternal threshold, the quiet chimney-corner, where his mother had rocked his cradle, the field of cabbages where his father had bid him adieu, the great devil of a mill whose wings, as they whirled around, seemed to have given him, when far distant, a last friendly signal. He took the stage-coach; he found all his friends again, the mill the first of all. "I want to live in my own land," he exclaimed, as he inhaled with all his force his native air. After having hugged everybody, down to the servant-girl, who had never seen him before, but who wept as well as the rest, Watteau threw a fagot in the fireplace, although it was one of the finest days of July. "You are losing your senses, Antoine," said his father.—"Let him alone," said his mother; "his great uncle had much the same kind of whims." Watteau lit the fire, made his mother sit in the old arm-chair, he put the spectacles astride the nose of his father, gave his little sister a lighted stick, and begged the servant-girl to put the coffeepot on the fire. The cat came of her own accord and began to jump about the and-irons. "Wonderful," said Watteau, "but I should not have forgotten her."—"He is crazy," said his father, with anxiety.—"No, no," said his mother, who fancied that she understood him, and smiled

with calm tenderness. When Watteau saw everybody in their place, he stretched his eyes wide open, he once more contemplated the thoroughly patriarchal scene which carried him back to his childhood; a good smile of the old time, somewhat saddened by recollection, spread over his pale face. "There it is; see the fire shooting up its flames, my father reading the Almanac, my mother watching the children, the servant who arranges and disarranges the things, the sun sending in his beams, the coffeepot simmering, the old clock marking the strides of time; there it is: I have found the true picture of my life.—"But," said he, in a couple of days, "how is it that there is something wanting to the picture? It is my heart of twelve years old that is wanting. I have lost all the simplicity of my heart; I have let myself be ruled by glory, by noise, by Mademoiselle la Montagne, and such like. My heart is as restiff and unquiet as Paris: nothing can appease it. My theatre is no longer here. I should die of ennui in less than six weeks.

Some days after, Watteau returned to Paris, carrying tears and benedictions with him. At the time of his departure, his poor mother was cast down and feeble. "Adieu, my dear," said she, in a stifled voice, "adieu. I have a presentiment that you will never see me more. You should have taken my portrait."—"I have it here," said Watteau, putting his hand to his heart. "As soon as I return to Paris, I shall have no trouble in taking a copy." He left with these words. When he saw his native land recede into the distance, the rich fields of Flanders, the last spire, and the last mill of his country

disappear, he felt sadder than ever; the form of his suffering mother was always before his moistened eyes. "The poor woman will die soon," thought he sadly. Watteau, however, died first.

He returned beneath Audran's roof to paint figures for arabesques, but devoted his evenings and leisure hours to a picture for the sterile prize of the Academy. Everybody has seen the engraving from this picture, the *Pilgrimage to Cythera.* It is a fairy scene, full of fire, spirit, grace, and impertinence, but, above all, full of charm, attractiveness, and enchantment. How glad one would be to set off in that vessel, which has only Love for sailors, with those women so nonchalantly amorous. The Academy, which was none too academic in those days, deigned to crown Watteau, and did more, for he received the title of Academician, as *Painter of Fêtes Galantes.* Watteau, until then obscure and poor, soon had fame and money enough to throw out of the window. He became the fashionable painter, but solely among the men. The women were never on his side; perhaps, because the figures of his pictures did them great injury; perhaps, because he was a misanthrope. His head, besides, was in singular contrast with his genius. He was hard-featured, the expression of his face was melancholy, his complexion pale. In spite of his happy fortunes at the opera, he went into society with great reluctance, for he was neither gallant, nor a good speaker. You see that he could not succeed with the women, but the roués were vociferous in his praise. He was eagerly sought after, the great noblemen all wanted *Pilgrimages to Cythera*, rural

masquerades, promenades in the fields, in a word, *Fêtes Galantes*. Palaces, chateaux, saloons, boudoirs, he went everywhere dispensing alms from the tip of his brush. He had always a picture ready in his imagination for the gallery of love. His comedy of gallantry, like the philosophic comedy of La Fontaine, was composed of a hundred different acts.

For the first time in his life he at last had a lodging and furniture of his own; he had long dreamed of this little happiness, but this happiness was only a calamity. His rooms in a few months became the refuge of all the artistic amateurs and idlers. The first who happened to come, called for a design, or sometimes his or her portrait; he took *her* portrait, but not *his*. Soon overwhelmed by importunate intruders, he again sought hospitality, this time from M. Crozat. He was a bad painter, but a fine gentleman who had a gallery; now all the visiters wanted to see Watteau as the most curious picture in the gallery. The poor painter took refuge elsewhere, with his friend the Chevalier Vleughels, afterward director of the Academy at Rome. He had at last a little leisure in his new abode. Genius is like love, it loves silence and solitude; hope and inspiration, in visiting the lover or the poet, wait until every one has left.

III.

About this time Watteau came near having a pleasant adventure. One morning, that is to say about two o'clock in the afternoon, a lacquey covered with gold lace from head to foot, came and requested him somewhat mysteriously, to follow him to his mistress's hotel. Watteau dressed himself as simply as usual, for Watteau was anything but a fop; he took too much pains to dress up his heroes and heroines to think about himself. He followed the lacquey without saying a word to him. On arriving at the hotel, which was a magnificent one, he was silently conducted to a boudoir resplendent with velvet, silk, and gold. "It appears," said he, seating himself on a divan, "that I am in good fortune." Half an hour afterward, as he was still alone in the boudoir, he rose, drew aside the taffeta curtain, and looked out of the window facing the garden of the hotel. He saw at the first glance a Marinette or a Marton, with a sparkling eye, roguish mouth, pretty alluring face, who appeared to be anxiously searching for something, she went backward and forward, right and left, up and down, in innumerable zig-zags. What was she thus seeking for? Nothing but a rose, but it was the rose of the fairy tales; autumn had come, and the bed of roses was strewed with leaves. The rustling, dried-up rose-bushes displayed only withered calices, and buds which dared not open to the sharp blast of October. Watteau was amused in watching all the vain searches of the waiting-woman. At last, disgusted and out of patience, she ascended the

marble steps of the entrance. Almost at the same moment, however, Watteau saw her reappear, followed by her mistress, who was scolding her. Watteau could, after this, only look at the latter. She was fair and languishing, she sauntered indolently along in satin slippers; she had negligently thrown a pelisse of gray silk over her half naked shoulder; her hair fluttered in long ringlets like the locks of the *Belle de Lude* in Mignard's portrait. She went along the garden, turning aside and stopping at every rose-bush. As the roses were no longer fresh, she scattered their leaves with her pretty fingers in an abstracted manner, with the sad smile of thoughtfulness. "You see yourself, madame," said the servant to her in the middle of the chief avenue, "you see yourself that they are all gone."—"There is no use of your saying so, Juliette, you know that I must have a rose. I can no longer be painted without a rose. If I were still twenty I might do without."—"I have guessed it," said Watteau, "the rose is for me, that is to say, for my pencil." The beautiful lady stopped suddenly with an ! of delight, before a rose-bush which was still verdant. She plucked one of the most recently blown roses; threw her pelisse and her ringlets a little apart, placed the rose in her bosom as if arranging herself before Juliette. The mirror responded to her liking — they immediately re-entered. Watteau fancied that the mistress was coming with her rose, he withdrew with trepidation from the window. The clatter of horses, wheels, and footmen, was heard in the court. In a moment, the entire mansion seemed to be topsy-turvy. "Here is a sad piece of luck," said Watteau; "it is some one, per-

haps, who has come to gather the rose." He waited quietly for some one to come to him, having no other means of amusement, than to watch the sky through the window. He heard joyous cries and peals of laughter. He asked himself if, instead of being in good fortune, he was not to be the painter of the good fortune of another. At last, after waiting more than an hour, light footsteps in the adjoining apartment informed him that the beautiful lady was about to appear. The door opened, and he rose with a bow. "Monsieur Watteau," said the lady, "I regret having made you lose so much time."—"Time passed in waiting for you, madame, is not lost time."—"Monsieur Watteau," continued the lady with dignity, "I like madrigals and gallantries very well but in painting." Turning to the servant-maid, "Juliette, bring the palette and brushes."—"In faith," said Watteau, touched to the quick, "I am little in condition to paint to day. Besides, I paint only fancy portraits." —"Come, Monsieur Watteau, do not be too coquettish, my portrait is now expected; there is no one but yourself in the world to paint it with gracefulness."—"I will return to-morrow, madame; the rose in your bodice will be fresher. I should never be able to find colors to paint the one which is there now." With this, Watteau bowed with profound reverence, took his hat and departed to the great surprise of the lady. In the street, he learned that she was Madame de Parabère. "The devil," said he, "he who arrived in so noisy and inopportune a manner, was Philippe d'Orleans, the regent of the kingdom."

Watteau was at first taken somewhat aback by

these two names; he was afraid of the Bastile, and did not dare to return to Madame de Parabère. As he did not know how to write to ask pardon, he fancied that he would do so by a picture, in which Madame de Parabère should be painted from recollection, with all the charms in the world; but, doubtless without intending to do so, Watteau was satirical instead of complimentary. He had seen Madame de Parabère looking for roses in autumn, he painted Madame de Parabère looking for roses in autumn, the garden of Madame de Parabère completely devastated by evil winds.

Watteau, was himself devastated by evil winds; the contests with misery, devouring thirst for fame, his too vagabond passions, under the operatic sky, had, little by little, worn out his frail and nervous constitution, all fire and restlessness. He inclined more and more to solitude and misanthropy. He had been melancholy, he became moody, he had no longer heart for anything; yet he had, from habit, all the light graces and nonchalant gayeties of his genius in his pictures. To divert himself, he went to the Prince of Condé, at the chateau of Chantilly, to paint in allegory, the profane passions of the regent. He returned to Paris still more wearied and saddened. What was this obstinate sadness owing to? Was he always homesick? Was he anxious about his future state? Was he unfortunate in love? None of these: he was the victim of the worst of sorrows, that which is causeless. He had an old friend at Nogent-sur-Marne, the curé of the parish. He went and passed six weeks at the parsonage to recruit himself. Do you know what was the fruit of this at-

tempt? He found that the curé was a capital model for a clown; so with so good an original before him he could not restrain himself from still making grotesques, but always with the same gravity. His best clowns and pantaloons, it is said, date from this period, but his *Doctor* harnessed with the collar of a cart-horse certainly does. He had the spleen, he wanted to travel. You will not guess where he went with his spleen? He went to England. This finished him. He returned from there more pale, and more sombre, weary of everything, even of labor, formerly his dearest refuge.

Until that time, Watteau had had copyists but no pupils. On his return from London, a pupil presented himself with the appearance of one of the gentlemen of his *Fêtes Galantes*. He was like a dream of Watteau. The pupil was called Nicolas Lancret.

IV.

Nicolas Lancret, born at Paris in 1690, possessed from an early age a delicate touch. His father intended him for an engraver; he studied under D'Ulin. One evening, however, on beholding the fairy scenes of Watteau and Gillot at the opera, he exclaimed: "This is my country!"—The next day he sought out Gillot, who received him, as was his custom, with open heart.—"I have until now engraved sacred history; I should like better to paint profane tales with you. Lancret was a wit, and used antithesis. Gillot taught him how to manage light and shade, boldness and grace of outline. He, however, did not accomplish anything of moment under Gillot, and did

nothing at all in landscape. Gillot gave him scarcely anything to paint but grotesque pieces. He was somewhat wanting in spirit and gayety, was as patient as an engraver, and therefore lacked freedom. His grotesques were cold and slovenly. After some years of fruitless study, he entreated Watteau to give him some lessons. Watteau, who was not a wit in his discourse, was of great service to him; he made him paint under his supervision. Seeing that Lancret was taking a great deal of pains to copy him, he seized his pencil, broke it, and said to the young painter, "Since you have got so far, I must now serve you in another way."

They were at Nogent. Watteau took Lancret into the country. He preserved silence for a long time, but at last, seeing that Lancret, completely amazed, seemed insensible to the beauties of Nature, he addressed him as follows: "You are too Parisian, my dear boy, you never take time to see anything. There is no use of your looking at one of my pictures for two hours. The pictures which you should observe are those before you. Take care! if you have no eyes for these, you will never be aught but a painter of fans; you will make Chinese figures on screens, or ornament the tops of doors in green and red. My pictures are masterpieces, I know; but what is a copy of my pictures? Are you not at this moment attracted by those distances, so soft and so tender, by this little spire, glistening in the sun, by this little meadow, sloping down to the pond? My dear boy, consider this well: that in copying Nature, you will seize her soul, her force, and her life; and in copying me, you will have only a nature which is dead. No

one will ever know the time which I have spent in watching the shaking of the leaves, the clouds float by, the fountains flow; and I shall not speak of the time which I have spent in watching women's smiles. But in this," continued Watteau, with a smile, "much time has been lost. That is quite another story."

From that moment, Lancret had his eyes open to the science of painting. Watteau's lessons were so excellent, that in a short time the pupil was more sought after than the master. At the first glance, there was the same magic charm; but to practised eyes there was a long interval between himself and Watteau. However, as Lancret went into good society, was a handsome fellow, had wit and coquetry, he almost cast the misanthropic Watteau into the shade.

Watteau was weary of everything, even of life, but not of glory. When he saw glory float from himself to Lancret; when he felt about him the icy atmosphere of abandonment, he was provoked at the new-comer, he became jealous. His sadness had thenceforth a cause. One morning, while walking along the quay, he saw a picture by Lancret in the window of a picture-dealer. There was a crowd before the window, and every one was exclaiming: "*What a pretty Watteau! what grace, what talent, what magical color! Watteau has surpassed himself!*"—The poor painter withdrew with a poisoned arrow in his heart. His friend Gillot was also jealous; the worthy man, in his indifference, had been dethroned from the opera: he had no longer an asylum for painting; he was reduced to that patient profession which Lancret had abandoned. He engraved

for prayer-books, he who had painted such glowing bacchanalian scenes. One day Watteau met him on the boulevard, in a gloomy mood, no longer amusing himself with the farces of the mountebanks.—"How does it happen that you look so sad and solemn?"—"My poor friend," said Gillot to him, as he pressed his hand, "you have done me a great injury; you have thrown me into the shade; you have taken all the cake. I can no longer find anything to paint; I am reduced to engraving."—"But, good heavens!" replied Watteau, "I am none the richer or more famous. At Paris, the man of genius of to-day is like a mistress, forgotten to-morrow. After having travelled so far, am I any more advanced on my journey? This fop of a Lancret has already got farther than I have; but what matter? I have chosen my own course."—"I know very well," said Gillot, "that you have made nothing by all that; but you have created innumerable imitators, who produce my naiads at the opera for half-price. Nothing is left for me in this world; and who knows whether poor Gillot will be once remembered in the other? You will at least leave works and a name; but I, only tattered decorations, screens, door-tops, a prey to spiders; the rest is carried off by the wind!"

Gillot dried his eyes. "You weep," said Watteau, much moved.—"Yes," said Gillot, resuming his smile and his philosophy; "I weep for my departed glory."—"Happy carelessness," said Watteau. And he continued to himself, "The wound in my heart is a thousand times deeper."

He withdrew from the world, and took up his abode at Nogent, near his dear curé, at *le Moulin-*

Joli, the countryhouse of his friend Le Fêvre, the master of the revels. Mademoiselle la Montagne, whose beauty had passed away as quickly as love does at the opera, followed Watteau into his Thebaid. The two volatile lovers were not greatly surprised to find one another under the same roof; but their harmony was not of long duration. Watteau, weary of pursuing glory, took to love in his hours of sombre misanthropy; he felt the approach of death; he saw, day by day, a leaf fall from the tree of his youth; when he inhaled the odor of the tomb, he clung with all his power to life. "It is work which has killed you," said Mademoiselle la Montagne.—"It is love; it is you," said Watteau, with the frankness of a man who has no longer anything to risk. The ice broken, he spoke without restraint; the ci-devant danseuse, who was dying with mortification at being no longer young or pretty, replied with bitterness. According to Madame de Lambert, they went so far as to fight. It was a sad picture to see those two lovers without love, already dead to all the joys of youth, and having only as a last feeling despair, regret, or anger. Not being able to hold out longer, Mademoiselle la Montagne went to Paris to spend the rest of her days. Watteau lived alone, having no other amusement than the cheerful gayety of the curé of Nogent.

He went but seldom to Paris. On one of his last visits he painted the ceiling of the shop of his friend Gersaint, a shopkeeper on the bridge of Notre-Dame, what he dealt in is not mentioned. According to the accounts of the time, this ceiling was one of Watteau's masterpieces, but it has most assuredly tum-

bled into the river. Our painter grew more feeble from day to day. He was seen night and morning sauntering sadly along the banks of the Marne. He was already but a shadow. At last, consumed by that fire of glory, genius, and love, which should have warmed his life, but which consumed it, he lay down to rise no more. His death was at once humorous and touching. He made his will and his confession on the same morning. By his will he bequeathed — what had he to bequeath? Debts; he bequeathed his debts to his four friends, De Julienne, Haranger, Hénin, and Gersaint. These gentlemen were worthy of posterity, for as true friends, they accepted the painter's bequest. In his confession, Watteau did not forget the well-known sin of having taken the good curé as a model for his best clowns. The curé for all that gave him absolution. As he presented an ivory Christ to the lips of the dying man, Watteau regarded this Christ with surprise, seeing it was badly sculptured. "Take away that crucifix," he exclaimed, raising his eyes to heaven; "it excites my commiseration; is it possible that an artist could have treated his master so badly." These were not Watteau's last words, but they were the last which have been recorded. Madame de Lambert, however, who also lived at Nogent, reports as follows: "In his last moments, the recollection of his country and family reanimated his heart. 'Ingrate that I am,' he exclaimed, 'I have never taken time, amid all the time I have wasted, to take my mother's portrait. Come, I must go to work.' He traced in the air with his finger, fancying that he was painting on the canvass."

He died alone. He was buried in a cemetery, none of the occupants of which he had known. He said a few days before he died, "It is sad to be buried in that place; I shall never see there again a living soul." The shade of Watteau will never be sought for in the cemetery of Nogent-sur-Marne; like all the great masters, Watteau is to be found in his works.*

Lancret, born happy, died happy. After having gone through a thousand gallant adventures, in the full deluge of profane passions, he had the unhoped-for joy of meeting with an ark to conduct him to port.

He had often, in descending the staircase of his residence, remarked with admiration a young girl, of scarcely eighteen, who had not the playfulness of girls of that age. She was of a tender and gentle beauty, not common at the end of the regency. When she passed on the staircase, he drew aside with involuntary respect; she bent her head and flew past like a bird. He imperceptibly accustomed himself to derive pleasure from seeing her, so that he more than once found himself descending the staircase without thinking of going out. He ascertained without difficulty that this pretty girl lived quietly in a poor apartment with her mother, who was destitute. Lancret was the lord of the establishment; he went and rapped at the door of the garret, incited thereto by a truly Christian charity. The young girl was weeping as she opened it, for

* In his last days he painted a picture representing a sick man in a *robe-de-chambre*, in the middle of a graveyard, seeking to escape from four or five syringes levelled against him; he had journeyed to the tomb with an escort of physicians and apothecaries, walking two by two in their dresses of ceremony. Watteau's pencil was so gay, that this picture, thoroughly funereal, is charmingly witty.

her mother was dying. Lancret had never seen such a picture; accustomed to silk, gold, and gayety, he was, so to speak, completely expatriated. He approached the sick woman with anxiety. The sick woman, who was a gentlewoman who had fallen on evil days, seemed by her proud glance to ask by what right he intruded on their hidden grief, their silent wretchedness.

Lancret was the most troubled; not knowing what to say, he spoke too soon of assistance. "I do not desire alms," said the sick woman. "I owe respect to my father's name. If God does not come to my aid, I know how to die, and to die well. As for my daughter, she will go to a convent."—"Madame," said Lancret, very much affected, "I dare not say that it is God who has sent me; but tell me your father's name, perhaps—"—"His name, sir, was Boursault."—"What, Boursault! who was such a favorite of Louis XIV.? Is this what he has left you?" Lancret had turned his eyes toward the young girl; she was the angel of sorrow. "Madame," said he, seizing the hand of the mother, "I am so far from wanting to bestow alms upon you, that I am about to ask of you a favor."—"A favor, sir," said she bitterly; "what do you mean to say?"—"I am Lancret the painter. I was poor also; I have labored; I have become rich; well, all I have, name, heart, fortune, is your daughter's, if you so wish." The sick woman looked at Lancret with surprise. "Monsieur Lancret," said she, reflectingly, "yes, you are a celebrated painter."—"I have no longer my mother," continued Lancret, pressing the hand of the daughter of Boursault, "I have no longer a mother,

but, if you will, I shall find her again."—"Ah, Monsieur Lancret, I do not know how to answer you."

At this moment, the young girl, deeply touched by the simple and generous words of Lancret, advanced to the bed, took her mother's other hand, and said in a low tone, "I shall feel happy and honored to be the wife of Monsieur Lancret."

The marriage . . . I should say the sacrifice, was celebrated a fortnight afterward. The sacrifice was nobly accomplished even to the end; the time which Boursault's grandchild passed with Lancret, was filled for him by that ever tender and solicitous friendship, which is worth full as much as love and its caprices. He died two years afterward; he would have died a solitary death, the prey of some Thérèse Levasseur, who, the day after his funeral, would have married at his expense his valet-de-chambre; he died aided by the blessings, the devotion, and the prayers of a noble woman, who wept for him, and always respected his name. Marriage is, after all, a refuge for the heart, for fortune, and, perhaps for art; the hand of a good and beautiful woman often restrains the pen and the pencil from going astray.

Lancret dead, the inheritance of Watteau was not claimed. The Vanloos, Lemoine, and Boucher, had commenced, in coquettish painting, another gallery, in which there were reminiscences of the painter of Valenciennes; but the school of Watteau was nevertheless closed. Lancret, with all his talent and perseverance, was but an echo, a reflection in the water, a moonlight; he had neither the fire, the touch, nor the soul, of the master. I have seen one of the most celebrated *Fêtes Champêtres* of Lancret.

You may find in it, as in all genre pictures, amorous beauties dancing with gallant cavaliers. This is not, however, its peculiarity. There are players on the violin and the flute in the picture, who are evidently playing the airs of Lully. Nothing is wanting but speech, the fingers move about the flute and the violin, the feet beat in measure, the dancers dance with much good will. This artificially-animated picture, which sings and dances with this music, which is in such good keeping with its characters, is still not so lifelike as a *Fête Champêtre* of Watteau, which has only the artifice of painting.

V.

Watteau was, *par excellence*, the painter of wit and of love, *the painter of Fêtes Galantes*. It is true that he has caught the secret of Nature, but he is an enchanter who shows her to us through a prism. He was the most coquettish and most gentle, the most delicate and most smiling of all the painters of the eighteenth century. His pencil was sparkling, his touch had the lightness of a bird. There is in his color the fire of the diamond, and the freshness of the dew. It is an enchantment for the eye, which is astonished, gazes, and is astonished again. There are boundless horizons which may be covered by a woman's hand, and sunlight and shadow that might deceive us. His works are most varied ; besides his rural masquerades and *Fêtes Galantes*, he has painted soldiers halting, which put to shame those of Wouvermans, Chinese figures ravishing as those at the chateau de la Muette, tricks full of mis-

chief as at the chateau of Chantilly. One day, for a change, he even took it into his head to try a more serious subject, and painted a *Virgin and Child*, which was considered worthy of Vandyck. Where have his thousand pictures gone to? The greater part of his pretty figures of disguised marchionesses have vanished like the marchionesses themselves. In 1792, chateaux were deserted, leaving to the fury of the sans-culottes the fresh figures of Watteau, scattered here and there, over a door or a chimney-piece, on a panel or a screen. These devastating sans-culottes, the heroes and vandals of the eighteenth century, cut to pieces these slight masterpieces, whose offence was doubtless that of recalling the festivals of wit and love.

Watteau had but few critics, to judge him. Voltaire contents himself with saying that the painter of *Fêtes Galantes* was in the graceful, what David Téniers was in the grotesque. La Motte Houdard has written some ingenious verses in his praise:—

> Dame Nature, on a day, in French costume arrayed,
> Coquettishly desired to have her portrait made:
> What did the kind mother? She gave birth to Watteau.

This description is just. Watteau is truly the child of *Dame* Nature in French *costume arrayed*, having the *coquettish* desire of seeing her portrait.

Bernis adored Watteau's works. I reproduce this strophe of the Cardinal of . . Pompadour, which indicates sufficiently well the frivolous taste of the time:—

> Song, the lovely child of folly,
> Has sprung to life in this our age,

Song, the foe of melancholy,
Alike the joy of fool and sage;
While trifling thoughts our minds inspire,
We throw aside th' immortal lyre,
For tambourine of Erato;
See Homer for Chapelle retire,
And if Apelles we admire,
We love both Teniers and Watteau.*

Watteau possessed the power of enchanting us by his smiling landscapes and adorable figures. Before his time, the poets and novelists had bewildered our imagination about these unknown shores now and then dimly seen in a charming dream; before him a thousand oases and Eldorados had smiled upon us, with their nymphs, their roses, and their songs. We had slept in the island of Cythera, at the feet of Venus, still white with the sea-foam; we had traversed the ocean, with the song of the sirens; we had sighed in

* The works of Watteau are in three volumes, containing five hundred and sixty-three plates. One hundred and thirty compositions form the first volume; the second and the last contain fancy sketches, ornaments, landscapes, Chinese figures, and screen decorations. They are well engraved by himself. His designs are very curious both to see and study. He almost always drew with red chalk on white paper, a process which gave him transfers. He scarcely ever heightened his designs with white, the ground of the paper answering sufficiently for this purpose. He likewise drew with two crayons, black and red, or black lead and red; sometimes the whole three were in requisition, particularly for heads and hands. In early life, he painted in body colors and pastel; in fact, everything suited his hand marvellously, except the pen. The happy and singular effect of the hatching, the freedom and delicacy of the touch, the spirit and grace of the profiles, the head-dress in charming taste, but above all, the original character of the figures, grotesque or graceful, would always indicate the hand of Watteau. All the good engravers have more or less badly engraved after Watteau; Audran, Thomassin, Tardieu, Cochin, Simonneau, Larmessin, Aveline, Moreau, Petit, Lebas, Lépicié, and Boucher, have never been able to render the adorable fancy of this charming painter.

the island of Calypso; we had dreamed among the countless winding paths of Olympus. A new enchanter appeared, by the name of Tasso; another, who styled himself D'Urfé. We have adored Armida in her palace; we gathered garlands for the shepherdesses on the banks of the Lignon. There were none, even to the fairies of Perrault, who did not bewilder us with their enchantments. Watteau was the last of these enchanters. The Eldorados which we had seen in the misty confusion of our dreams, were, thanks to him, made visible to our open eyes, in the sumptuous parks, the verdant retreats, the arbors, shaded by soft foliage, filled by marble fountains, and peopled by nymphs and satyrs. It is Nature still, but Nature on a day of festival, and in full dress. What a beautiful romance could be made out of a landscape of Watteau! The romance is, however, ready made; there is but one page; all that is needed for the romance of happiness. Mark those ever-verdant trees, on which the sun throws all its brilliancy; advance under their shadow, where are scattered the most beautiful of women and most ardent of lovers. Listen: it is an intoxicating concert: the breeze shakes the roses and violets; the fountain spreads its crystals on the moss; in so beautiful a place the dove flaps her wings in passing; the turtle-dove coos near by. Listen yet! here those rosy lips are singing of love; the charming mouth promises happiness! Do you hear, farther off, those gentle words, that kiss taken ere granted? Do you perceive the eloquent silence? The grass is fresh and covered with flowers; come forward again, to admire the ornaments of these beautiful ladies; they

have none other than their smile and their glance! Find me a diamond as sparkling as that eye, a rose as fresh as that smiling mouth! They are covered with nothing, as if from the love of God! An indiscreet bodice, where a hand is sometimes placing a bouquet, a rumpled petticoat, a scarf which plays in the wind and plays with love; more frequently a domino, satin slippers, and a fan, that is all, but quite enough, I fancy. It, however, often happens that this dress is doffed for a bath in the river. What capricious naiads! We have then no other veil than the waves, the foliage, the evening mist, the atmosphere. The landscape is always a masterpiece. A statue stands near the old elm-tree, art amid nature. The vapory distances attract, the brilliancy of the foreground dazzles you. I regret, however, not to see in the corner of the picture the little beggar gayly munching his crust, at the side of the road. Such a new-comer would perhaps be a happy contrast to those happy groups of lovers; it would be a recollection of the truths of humanity face to face with all these brilliant falsehoods; the women would be none the less handsome; the lovers none the less gallant; on the contrary, every one would be the gainer, especially the spectator. A great master never forgets that poetry is beautiful only by its contrasts; a perpetual smile lasts too long; the fairest falsehood deludes but for a moment. When Poussin painted Arcadia, that other Eldorado so dear to all dreamers, he took care not to paint an eternal smile. His landscape reminds one of God by its grandeur; it is, in truth, the land of the golden age. We would all, kings, poets, soldiers, whatever we might be,

gladly go there, and take the trowel, or guide the plough. In the middle of the landscape, however, we do not find foolish dances, or amorous sports, but a tomb. The sepulchral inscription is not long, but it speaks with emphasis to the imagination of the passer-by: *Et in Arcadia ego.* This is not the whole of the human side of the picture: two boys and two girls of the country, happy as are lovers of sixteen, who live in Arcadia, are suddenly arrested by this tomb in their poetic promenade: they were going gayly along, the lovers all radiant with joy, the beloved decked with garlands of roses; they were in quest of love, but here they met with death, death which strikes the flower as well as the withered stock, the singing-bird, as well as the owl. Sadness by degrees veils enjoyment in the face of the lovers, a ray from heaven descends into their souls. They were face to face with death, who pursues his impious work in all lands, even in Arcadia. Their heart is touched; these lovers, believe me, have made a great step toward love; they have gone, thanks to this timely lesson, as far as divine tenderness, as the science of life. Watteau, however, had loved only at the opera; in his time no one believed any longer in anything, either in God or in love; at least, love was only the superannuated Cupid of the ancients, the god of pleasure and gallantry. All that was asked of him was a little intoxication, forgetfulness of this and of the other world; silk petticoats, madrigals, artificial flowers, and finally, the canopy of the bed while awaiting the canopy of heaven. Watteau was not to blame: it was his age.

Why, moreover, should we ask from the verdant

valley, full of flowers and sunlight, the robust plants of the mountain? Let us cherish Watteau in his charming untruthfulness. Besides, he is truer than he seems to be. His figures have always the spirit of the persons whom they represent. Do not look for the good nature of the citizen, the noble and proud look of the thinker or the warrior, the rural and *naïve* simplicity of the peasant. His heroes are always heroes of gallantry; his philosophers seek the science of life in love; those whom he preferred to paint above all others were actors, actors of all kinds, actors on the stage, actors in real life.

Seeing, therefore, all about him gallant parties, where noblemen and noble women revelled, careless of the morrow, Watteau, without seeking a reason, painted *Fêtes Galantes*, in which his amiable genius revelled in all the fire and magic of color. Who knows, however? In almost all the pictures of this charming painter there is a distant spire, which soars heavenward, and casts its shadow over the cemetery; it is always a Flemish spire, slight and pointed, a souvenir of his dear country. Now does not this silent spire against the horizon tell the same tale as the tomb by the wayside, in Arcadia?

THE VANLOOS.

The school of Watteau had only a transitory reign —the reign of a pretty woman who presumes upon her coquetry. Jean-Baptiste Vanloo, Carle Vanloo, Lemoine, and Boucher, divided among themselves the succession of Watteau. It would be impossible to say now who of the four was the most celebrated, there are so many contradictory statements on this point in the memoirs of the day. The most worthy and perhaps the least noted, was Jean-Baptiste Vanloo.

The critics, after having exalted the Vanloos, have contemptuously cast them into oblivion; their works remain to appeal to from these blind judgments. While condemning the tinsel and the *sans-facon* of most of their works, we can not but recognise in them some brilliant marks of inspiration. After Poussin and Lesueur, the Vanloos appear only as artists of small calibre; but by the side of the painters of the eighteenth century, with Boucher at their head, the Vanloos assume a certain degree of dignity, if not

of greatness.* Thanks to them, French art still bore the palm. It was owing to them that France still followed the nearly-true furrow at a time when so many others strayed away in a thousand deceptive windings.

A certain freedom and a charming negligé characterized the talent of Jean-Baptiste Vanloo; he was wanting rather in patience than study. His was a rich and happy nature that was squandered almost without any benefit to art. His name survives; several of his pictures will survive. You may observe, in some of the churches in Paris, and especially in the gallery of Versailles, the perfect freshness of his flesh color, the grace of his touch, and the dignity, somewhat theatrical, of his style. Critics of art in his day, used to say that his coloring was rich and unctuous, and that in this respect, he might be compared to Rubens. This judgment has been set aside, but still Jean-Baptiste Vanloo was the greatest colorist, perhaps the greatest painter of his day, between Watteau and Carle Vanloo.†

* They were chief painters to the kings of France, Spain, Sardinia, and Prussia, in a word, masters in nearly all those countries where art is cultivated; such a position could not have been acquired without some good reason.

† I have before me one of Jean-Baptiste's beautiful paintings. It represents a woman at her toilet, a *marquise* of the regency; perhaps it is simply a portrait. She is not alone, near her is a waiting-maid arranging some pearls in her hair. The two heads are perfect: they have delicacy, grace, airiness; the charmed glance of the beholder passes from the mistress to the maid, for they are both beautiful. The hands are skilfully touched, the accessories of the picture are very rich; the mistress holds a bouquet in her hand, which would give you a desire to inhale its perfume, if you were not afraid at the same time of approaching your lips too near to that beautiful hand. Charming and delightful coquette! how she looks at herself in the glass with the nonchalance of a swan! how she takes care not to make the

Carle Vanloo was born a painter, as one is born an apostle; but unfortunately, in his eyes, painting was rather a trade than an art. Still we must acknowledge him an artist; he had, even like some painters of the second class, his bursts of genius. It has occasionally happened, that he has thrown aside all remembrance of the old masters, has given himself up to his own inspiration, and originated a conception worthy of the great masters. More frequently, however, his works were but the confused recollection of various schools; sometimes it was the coloring and touch of Guido, sometimes the manner of Corregio; in his landscapes, it was Salvator Rosa; in his animals, it was Snyders or Desportes; but between these masters and Vanloo, there was the same distance as between a masterpiece and a copy. If, however, he saw nature through the eyes of others, he occasionally saw it with his own. To these stolen glances, so to speak, we owe his good pictures. By his almost natural style, he corrected somewhat the French school, which Coypel, De Troy, and Watteau, had given up to a theatrical, affected, and finical taste. Although somewhat weak and tame, his conception was pleasing, his touch delicate; he varied with a good deal of skill, the style of the brush and the crayon; he passed, without effort, from a forcible and severe effect, to a sweet and silvery tone. His coloring, though somewhat too red and white, has a certain charm and magical effect. The style of his heads is pretty, but hardly enough varied; it is always the

slightest movement for fear Rosette should fail in dressing her hair! The coloring in this picture is indeed *unctuous*. It might pass for a Venitian painting of the early time of the decline.

same face, as in Watteau's paintings, but with less spirit. His faces are often wanting in expression; they have dignity rather than character, grace rather than beauty. After having drawn a parallel between him and Rubens, they have not been afraid to compare him with Raphael in conception, with Corregio in touch, with Titian in color. After such sacrilegious praise, he has been immoderately disparaged; his pictures were said to be nothing but the *skins of an onion*, and other metaphors of the studio. Now that modern criticism has spread a great light over French art, every one sees Vanloo without a prism, such as he was: a very skilful painter, reaching genius nearly by chance, as some others reach it naturally. His facility was marvellous and deplorable; occasionally he would get into a rage with himself, he would destroy with a kick or a dash of his brush, the work of many weeks. He was a formidable and robust workman. You were always sure of finding him in his studio; he used to paint twelve hours on a stretch, always while standing. Although from the south, he did not like heat, and never complained of the cold. He discoursed about his art like an unlearned person, in a very picturesque kind of jargon. He was a true Fleming in mind; stupid enough to frighten one, Madame de Pompadour used to say; Diderot merely said brute; still Vanloo made some occasional happy remarks.

But it has always been acknowledged that good talkers are good for nothing; they have always their wit upon their lips. Observe them at work: the pen or the brush falls from their hands. Poor preachers! they have preached well; but they have no strength

to do anything, while, during the sermon, some one has been found to do a good deed without knowing it. Wit is often at war with the noblest and holiest enthusiasm; wit often costs a good deal. More than one brilliant sally has blossomed upon the ruins of the heart. There is one thing that is worth more than wit in the arts: that is contemplation, inspiration, poetry, a divine flower, a thousand times more rare, which grows naturally in some simple and pure hearts. Diderot knew how to describe it: "Distrust," says he, "those folks who have their pockets full of wit, and who scatter it on all occasions: they are not possessed of the spirit of genius."—Genius is often mute: it listens to nature, or listens to itself. Do not condemn it on account of its silence and its air of stupidity. Little birds warble; the bullfinch and the canary-bird chatter from morn till even; as soon as the day falls, they sleep; night coming, the solitary bird commences its sad and prophetic song. The bird of night which sings is the genius which watches.

Caroline Vanloo was the most beloved production of Carle Vanloo, a divine portrait which has gone to enrich the immortal gallery of heaven! The painter had married the celebrated Catharine Sormis, surnamed *La Philomène* of Italy. Madame Vanloo had one daughter and two sons: the daughter was the worthy counterpart of her mother, more beautiful, more gracious, more adorable even, pale, with long black hair, letting fall from her blue eyes, like an Italian sky, an angelic and charming look, speaking with a voice that went direct to your heart, a voice made rather for singing than speaking.—"Oh, Raph-

ael! Raphael!" exclaimed Vanloo, as he contemplated his daughter. When the artist had finished looking at her, then it was the father. Raphael is a great master, but God is a still greater master. Carle Vanloo regretted that he had not had earlier such a masterpiece under his eyes. Caroline Vanloo had in her beautiful face a certain brilliancy I can not describe, that ray of heaven which is a presage of death. In beholding her, people grew sad, as at the sight of those pure white visions of youth which cast upon us their fatal shadows.

She was less a woman than an angel. A clouded revery had early enveloped her soul; she spoke little, passed all the day in reading or musing, cared nothing for the pleasures of this world; at the balls she did not dance; she contributed to the enjoyment nothing but her ravishing smile; it might be said, that her soul alone loved life; her body was a tabernacle of marble.—"Books will be her ruin," the good Vanloo used constantly to say, who did not know how to read, and who did not see without alarm those thousands of black lines running one after the other; they were to him cabalistic signs. She often went to read or to muse in the studio, under the eye of her father, who had great trouble in getting a word out of her. He used to ask her opinion upon the heads of the saints or the pagan goddesses; she never answered a word, but her father saw her answer.—"Good! very good! my daughter do not say another word!"

One morning she descends to the studio, paler and more pensive than usual. Not seeing Carle Vanloo there, she seats herself upon his chair before the can-

vass, slightly daubed with some few dashes of the brush; she takes a crayon and sets herself to designing. Her father, who had followed her, enters the studio in silence; struck by the inspired air of his daughter, he approaches in the shade of a large picture, murmuring: "Ah, indeed, the Vanloos; they know how to design, without having learned!"—At the end of a few minutes, Caroline Vanloo lays aside her crayon, while she contemplates the figure she has just drawn. Carle Vanloo approaches her. Seeing her father all of a sudden, without having heard him approach, she utters a cry.—"You frightened me," said she, extending her hand to him.

At this moment the poor father turned pale; he beheld the figure designed by his daughter; the figure was Death! There was, indeed, the shroud, through which could be seen that dismal bosom of the only woman without breasts; there were, indeed, those feet which make the circuit of the world, digging a grave at each step; there was, indeed, that terrible scythe of the eternal harvest! but that which frightens Vanloo above all is, that Caroline, without knowing it, perhaps, has given her own angelic features to Death. These features are but slightly marked. Any one but Vanloo would not have recognised his Caroline, but Vanloo, Vanloo the painter, Vanloo, the father!—"My child," said he, while concealing his tears in a forced laugh, "we never begin in that way; arise; I will give you a lesson."

Caroline arose in silence. Carle Vanloo seats himself, effaces with a trembling hand his daughter's design, with the exception of the features of the face: takes his red chalk, and hastens to produce a change.

Already the head becomes animated with a pretty smile, the unbound hair floats in a spring-day breeze, a graceful contour moulds the bust, light wings are attached to it; it is no longer Death; it is Love!

The painter without quitting his design, adds some accessories: a quiver and arrows, doves cooing and billing, in a word, all the paraphernalia. Caroline Vanloo, who bends over her father, follows his crayon with a smile, sweet and bitter at the same time.

When Carle Vanloo had finished, had finished stifling his tears, he turned toward his daughter.—"Is not that correct?" asked he, as he kissed her hand. —"No," replied she, inclining her head in sadness.

Her father, observing her become paler, took her in his arms and carried her to the bedchamber of Madame Vanloo.—"Death, death!" cried the poor girl, stretching out her arms.

From that moment she became delirious. I will not attempt to paint the despair of her father; he remained by the side of the bed of Caroline, night and day, praying God for the first time in his life. She died a few days afterward. Might it not be said, that she died from being sick of life? If we are to believe Carle Vanloo, books alone killed his daughter!

The poor painter never could find any happiness after this terrible stroke; a dismal pall always covered his fortune and his glory. The dauphin meeting him at court some years after this misfortune, asked him why he was so sombre.—"Monseigneur, I am wearing mourning for my daughter," answered he, as he wiped away a tear. He had preserved in his studio, as a sad remembrance, the canvass on which Caroline had designed Death.

GREUZE.

I.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, French painting, like French poetry, abandoned itself entirely to all the extravagances of fancy, in order to rest awhile from its grand and severely dignified airs; it made itself pretty, coquettish, piquant, like a little marchioness disguising herself as a shepherdess, for a dance at the court. I am far from denying the capricious charm of its fooleries, and its masquerades. All these pretty trickeries of the art had, however, had too long a sway. Finally, Greuze came, as Boileau would say; Greuze swept away with the end of his brush the whole of this tarnished tinsel, which had dishonored the art; he gave it a more worthy and more noble adornment, that of tears. Prudhon and Géricault went farther in search of sentiment, but Greuze put them on the track; Greuze was one of the small links of the golden chain which united Lesueur to Prudhon.

I have discovered more true poets among the painters and musicians than among the poets who make verses. Greuze is a poet, without the rhyme and pretence, the poet of every-day grace, of truth

in rags, of the sentiment of the common people, the poet of the chimney-corner. When he came into the world, at any rate, when he took up the pencil, we had had quite enough Virgins and Loves, saints and heathens, the Magdalen had too often wept, Venus too often smiled. Greuze sought for some charming figure to put on the scene afar from the sky, remote from Olympus; he had only to cast his eyes about him; why not paint that pretty blonde in a white bodice, her locks floating in the wind, who was watering marjorams under his window? Sophie who is plucking a daisy to pieces as she saunters along in the shade of that mysterious path? Joanna who is going dreamily and languidly to the fountain, as if to the fountain of love? Why seek so far for the poetry which sings at our feet? The age of poetry has passed; the age of the romance has come, for the painters as for the poets, and, so saying, Greuze was the first to compose romances on the canvass. He did not lose his precious time in studying the Romans on medals, the sylvans and dryads after Boucher, or after the antique; he studied with the poetry of color and sentiment, the first scene he came across; and of the first scene he came across, he always made a pretty picture, thanks to romantic poetry.

Greuze lived eighty years, like several of the celebrated men of his time. Strong souls hold on well; far from killing the body, they reanimate it incessantly. Do not believe the proverb that says that genius kills men; almost all great men have died the good death of old age. Titian was carried off by the plague on the eve of his hundredth year.

Greuze passed through passions, misery and sorrow, without succumbing; he resigned himself in good season to all human misfortunes; he lived without weariness, and without complaining, refreshing himself with every ray of the sun, with every smile of love. The secret of his good humor, was — work.

The family of Greuze was originally of Bussy, on the banks of the Saône; we find among his ancestors a Seigneur de la Guiche, near Icilly, procureur of the royal sheriffalty. His father was an architect of Tournus in the same part of the country. It was there that, in August, 1725, Jean-Baptiste Greuze was born. As soon as he knew how to hold a pen, he used it to make a portrait of his schoolmaster; at seven, having found a large number of Rembrandt's designs, he exclaimed like Correggio: "I too am a painter!" and forthwith blackened the wall of his little room with mysterious and fantastic faces. His father, who had no idea of any other art than the art of Perrault, the art of architecture, with its festoons and astralogues, augured well at first for architecture, from his son's precedents; he made him draw windows, temples, and Doric columns; but as you may imagine, Greuze always put somebody in the window, his mother, his sister, or his cousin. The father, who saw nothing good in Raphael or Rembrandt, ended by interdicting every kind of figure. Greuze was eight years old, he pretended to obey, but he did not draw any the less as soon as he found himself alone. The irritated father watched him closely; at each surprise the poor Jean-Baptiste was somewhat rudely treated; a little pique was mingled with his rebellion. The idea came into

his head of revenging himself on his father by a masterpiece. He watched the best half of the nights without saying anything about it even to his sister. His paleness and languor caused astonishment; a physician was consulted, who did not fail to order a dose; Greuze asked three days respite. The feast of St. James arrived, his father's birthday; at the break of day, Greuze appeared, half sad, half joyful, bearing in one hand a bouquet, gathered the evening before, in the other, a head of St. James. The father embraced his son, smelt the bouquet, looked at the St. James; "Where did you get this engraving?" —"Father, I am again guilty."—"Pshaw, it is an engraving." While examining it, the father at last discovered here and there the trace of the pen. He could not resist admiring the grace and delicacy of this little masterpiece, but he soon returned to his own notions. "I will pardon you again for this time, but let it be the last."—"I will make no more," said Greuze, disgusted. He returned to his chamber and set to work again.

For some years it was an interminable conflict between the painter and the architect; happily, the mother was always between the combatants, appeasing the one and consoling the other. Greuze had taken a liking to pastoral life; he loved the verdant landscapes, the rural walks, the harmonious repose of the thickets, the simple scenes of the valley. He frequented the banks of the Saone, to muse and sketch in sight of the harvest-men and sailors; he joined in the fêtes of the neighboring village; he danced without ceremony at the cottage wedding. He thus amassed some precious recollections, which

have spread a morning freshness over all his works. He was thirteen years old; the war was waged without intermission. One evening a wretched painter, Gromdon, passing through Tournus, stopped at the office of the architect with a quantity of pictures. "Do you want any pictures, Monsieur Greuze? I have them of all prices, all styles, and all religions." —"Pictures!" exclaimed the architect; "do you want a painter? I will give him to you for nothing."

Although a painter, Gromdon was by no means an ill-timed visiter at the architect's. After supper, he witnessed a very picturesque scene between the father and the son. Greuze, having quitted the table before the others, had taken it into his head to sketch the two forms of his father and Gromdon, both a little exhilarated by their wine, in charcoal on a flagstone. The father, having recognised himself, wanted to pull his son's ears; Gromdon appeased him by declaring that he would take the rebellious child with him to his *manufactory*. Gromdon had a veritable manufactory of pictures, portraits, and signs; he was the painter of the chateau and the tavern; of the church and the low haunt. He had under his direction some half dozen little daubers, who manufactured a picture a week; Greuze soon manufactured one a day, in order to surpass his fellow-students. This superhuman labor would have exhausted a common mind, but Greuze could work, as he himself phrased it, on his legs. It was only play for his prodigal hand. He was maturing in his mind more serious productions; the workman was soon to disappear before the artist. Previously, however, to this transformation, he passed through a

love ordeal. You may, perhaps, suppose that he allowed himself to be caught by the face or profile of some young maiden, among those whom he painted so well! Not at all; he became infatuated with the wife of his master; she was pretty, she was tender: pardon him, pardon both! Greuze himself will relate to you the enchantments of this first love.

When twenty years old he made a real picture: he had seen, during one of his rambles, an old farmer of venerable mien reading the Bible to his family around him. This truly patriarchal scene had captivated him. He painted from recollection, at hazard, without model and without guide. His master was astonished at the picture.—"Go," said he to Greuze, "you have nothing more to do here."—It must be said, that Gromdon was at that time jealous.

Greuze set out for Paris without a sou in his pocket, but with a brilliant *cortége* of hopes. He painted portraits for a living as he went along: it was the adventurous journey which we all make in our twentieth year, the only delightful journey of our lives. We set out; we go straight on; will we arrive at our journey's end? What matter? Our step is so light and our heart sings so merrily. Greuze arrives at Paris; Paris seen from afar, is the Paradise of the world, but now it is to Greuze but a noisy solitude. Where shall we go? the desert lies all around us. He halted in a pitiful tavern in the Rue Richelieu, knowing none too well how he should pay for his lodging. The very next day he went to the Academy of Painting, where he found only Cupid and his train. It was in the flourishing days of the school of Boucher; the mythology played an important part in the

science of painting. Greuze understood nothing about it.

He did not wish to be of any school; he did not recognise any master; he painted by himself, in full liberty, hence his originality. The fashionable painters at first made themselves merry with this proud youngster, who knew nothing, and wanted none of their science; but the world was soon of another opinion in the matter of Greuze. Men of sense were found, who were tired of tinsel, who were not afraid to smile upon the ravishing faces of the proud youngster. He was, as Diderot said, an original painter, whose "mission" was to give a kick in the rear to all the Cupids of Boucher.

II.

As soon as Greuze had made a little money, he was desirous, like a painter truly inspired, of making a journey to Italy. It was almost the counterpart of the "*voyage pittoresque*" of Grétry. He did not derive much inspiration from the masterpieces of the great masters. He did not spend much time in studying the genius of Raphael; he admired the adorable *Virgins* of that king of painters; but he admired much more a handsome Roman girl, who was a masterpiece by the divine Creator! He had brought with him to Italy letters of introduction, which were far from being as valuable to him as his ardent dreams of glory and genius. One of these letters was, however, worth something to him, if not for his advancement, for love; and, painter though he was, he liked better a gentle word from the heart

than a proud laurel crown. He, therefore, after the fêtes which Fragonard and his other friends of the Academy offered him on his arrival, went forthwith to the palace of the Duke del Orr—. The duke received him very graciously, like a grand seignor, who foresees a man of genius. Greuze appeared at an apropos moment. Our grand seignor had an adorable daughter, who dreamed of naught but painting. A teacher was necessary for the young lady. Greuze would do as well as another. On beholding Letitia for the first time, who was in truth a masterpiece of nature's handiwork, Greuze asked himself whether this lesson was not also for himself. The lesson was for both. The day after came another lesson. —"Genius comes from the heart," said Greuze to himself. He had used the same expression on several former occasions, but never with equal truth. He loved Letitia as an angel is loved, and as a woman is loved; she had such celestial purity and corporeal beauty, so much divine and human grace. He did not love alone: the two souls of master and scholar had expanded together like two spring roses under the same sun's rays. It was not yet love; it was tenderness, it was that ineffable sentiment which rises daily from this world like incense toward divinity! Greuze was happy in his own love, but still more in that of Letitia for him. Alas! this happiness passed quickly away. Like all happiness, it was but a look, a smile, a tear, nothing more, but is not all this happiness? Greuze foresaw that this love affair was to be but the illusion of an instant; it had sprung up without reflection, as love always does: it was to fall under the blow of common

sense; and really, as in those days the nobility had not yet lost the magic of their titles, a poor painter, though he had been a nobleman by right of genius, would needs have lost his time in adoring the Princess Letitia. Happily, love never loses time. Now kings no longer marrying shepherdesses, Greuze thought there was but one wise course to take, that of withdrawing from the palace of Del Orr—, thus concealing from Letitia his love, his regrets, and his tears. He confided everything to Fragonard, who called him the amorous cherubim, and ridiculed his fine sentiments. Fragonard had been at other schools; he had painted the turned-up nose of Mademoiselle Guimard, the sidelong glance of Mademoiselle Sylvia, the pursed up mouth of Mademoiselle La Prairie. Fragonard's sentiments did not go beyond that of the alcove. You may imagine the epigrams which Greuze had to undergo from such a comrade in gallant adventures. He fled to solitude, he took to melancholy; he wished to flee the adorable image of Letitia, but this image was everywhere smiling before him, like an enchantress. Did he take up palette and brushes, Letitia was at once sketched, as if by magic, on his canvass; did he wander about alone, he was insensibly drawn toward her. Often, even, as he wandered about the neighborhood of the palace, he saw her pensive countenance appear at a distant window.

One day, while he was sketching a head of the Virgin, in the church of St. Peter, perhaps to dissipate his recollections of the charming form of Letitia, the Duke del Orr— addressed him: "How is it,

Greuze, that you do not come any more to my palace? My gallery is deserted; my daughter has thrown her brushes aside, on losing her master. Come back, come back! During your absence, I have enriched my gallery with two heads by Titian: my old uncle wishes copies of them by Letitia. Come, therefore, and direct her still."

The next day Greuze returned to the palace, pale and trembling at the mere idea of again beholding his mistress, but that day he did not see her. Since the previous evening the fair Letitia had been ill, ill on account of not seeing Greuze any more. He commenced the copy of Titian alone. The next day as he stood in gloomy revery before the work of the great master, Letitia's maid came to him with a mysterious air. "Follow me," said she to him. Greuze regarded her with surprise as if he had not heard what she said. "Follow me," she repeated. Greuze obeyed like a child. He soon entered a chamber somewhat gloomily shaded by thick curtains of taffeta. At the first glance he saw Letitia in the shade, she was languidly reclining in an arm-chair. Although pale as a corpse, she suddenly blushed at the arrival of Greuze, she silently held out her hand, he fell on his knees to kiss this white hand. The poor princess became radiant with joy, she raised her head and cast on Greuze the sweetest glance that ever fell from the most beautiful of blue eyes. "Monsieur Greuze, I love you. Do not condemn me as an extravagant person, I love you, but," she bent down her head and appeared to await an answer from the painter. Greuze knew not what to say; he contented himself with a second time kissing Letitia's hand. "Yes,

Monsieur Greuze, why not tell you? I love you; but you?"

Greuze was still silent, lost as he was in unspeakable transport. Letitia augured ill from this silence, she withdrew her hand, and turning aside her face, began to weep.

Greuze at last roused from his dream—"If I love you!" exclaimed he, also in tears. "Ah, Letitia! But see, I have been enraptured ever since I first saw you."—"You love me!" said she with a cry of joy.

She fell into his arms completely overcome; for some moments there was between them but one heart, one breath, one soul. Greuze was the first to dissolve the enchantment. "Alas," said he, "we are but children; think well of this, Letitia. You love me? but you are the daughter of the Duke del Orr—. I adore you, but I am but a poor painter, without fame and without fortune. Love has treated me cruelly."—"You do not know what you are saying," murmured Letitia, who continued under the charm, "I love you and I marry you, it is all simple enough."—"But consider, my dear angel, your father."—"My father, my father, I know very well that he designs a husband for me, an ugly old fellow, his everlasting Caza—or in default of him, that fool of a count, Palleri, whom I have never seen, thank God. I am rich, by inheritance from my mother: I will give you my fortune, my heart, my life, all I have, for a kind look from you, you rogue. We will go to France, there the most modest abode will be a palace for us. Greuze will become a Titian, I shall become his wife; I shall be there to rest his head, I shall be there to love him; I shall be there

in his heart. But you say nothing? Why do you have that sad and thoughtful air? Is that the way you love me?"

Greuze allowed himself to be carried away by the seductions of love, he forgot titles of nobility, he built with Letitia the finest of air-castles, but soon recollecting himself, "Alas," said he, "why am I not a grand duke?"—"What a child you are making of yourself," said Letitia, "what are all these noisy titles good for? Do you wish for titles?" So saying, the beautiful Italian girl leaned like a gracious fairy over her lover, parted his blonde locks with her little hands, and set a kiss on his forehead which would have roused Alain Chartier. "Well," said she to him with a charming smile, "is not that title as good as any other?" Letitia's kiss was the sweetest that Greuze could have received, it was an ecstacy, a pure intoxication, a tender joy, such as is rarely vouchsafed to man. But he must quit her for all that. Greuze departed ravished, happy, enchanted, promising to return the day after. "To-morrow," said Letitia, "to-morrow, you shall not go alone."

Once out of the palace, the painter felt that he had quitted his Eden. Farewell to his enchantment, to his raptures. Greuze again became reasonable, he did not dare to abandon himself to the full poetic development of his adventure.—"No," he exclaimed, "I will not cast desolation in the house of this noble and worthy Duke del Orr—. Letitia is blind, it is my duty to enlighten her."

He drove far from him his illusions and his hopes, his love alone remained. The next day, when he again saw Letitia, he was pale and sad, the victory

which he had gained over his heart had cost him many tears. "What, sad?" exclaimed Letitia throwing herself upon his neck, "are you so, to terrify me?"—"Yes, sad, Letitia, because I love you too well—because I renounce you who would be my most holy joy and my purest glory."—"Why, have you lost your senses? You do wrong to jest so with my tenderness. Return to your reason, yesterday you were charming."—"Yesterday I was a fool, yesterday I listened only to my own heart; to-day—" "Is it possible that you are serious?" said Letitia, almost in anger, "then you do not love me. So if you pretended to love me, it was only to tear open my heart. It was barbarous! Go, go," said she, falling into an arm-chair, "you have wounded me mortally, but I wish to suffer alone, I do not wish to see you more."

With a trembling hand she pointed Greuze to the door. As on the day before, he had not the power of resisting such love. He threw himself at Letitia's feet, he dried her beautiful eyes with his lips, he swore a thousand times to obey her as a slave. "Well, then," said she resolutely, "let us set out this instant, Lucia accompanies us; my father is two leagues from Rome, at the house of Count Palleri, when he returns we shall be far away; we will pass through the garden, we shall find a carriage waiting for us at the gate; for I have thought of everything, I have not been afraid like you, I have not regretted the sacrifice for a moment."

She had drawn Greuze to the door of the room. "Have I forgotten nothing?" said she, pausing; she suddenly grew pale, Greuze saw her falter. "Letitia,

what is the matter?" said he taking her hands. "See," said she, still paler, "see."

She was looking with a troubled eye at the portrait of her father, hanging on the wall. This portrait was by Greuze; like all of Greuze's heads, this one possessed so much tenderness, that the spectator was softened at the first glance. The noble countenance also possessed a certain indescribable melancholy which went right to the heart. The duke seemed to be sadly reproaching his daughter for thus abandoning him. That mild look which he cast on his daughter at every hour of the day, the look which she sought when she first awoke, and when she betook herself to sleep, had suddenly assumed a mournful expression, which she had not before seen. "My father," said she. Her father was struggling with her lover in her heart, which beat violently. "I have no strength to go forward," said she, "sustain me and lead me."—"I have none either—let us pause here, Letitia; a last kiss, still as always under the eyes of your father, and then adieu for ever." Letitia made no answer. "If there is a sacrifice to be made," continued Greuze, "let it be for your father. Besides, consider well that love is beautiful only in its morn, that morn has risen for us, let us not go farther." She began to weep; extended her hands to Greuze, and said to him in a stifled voice, "I thank you." Greuze departed, fully resolved not to return again to the palace. The *femme-de-chambre*, who conducted him, said to him at the threshold: "Adieu, M. Greuze; on my conscience, you are a most gloomy lover."—"After all, perhaps the girl is right," said Greuze as he withdrew.

Five weeks after, Greuze saw the Marquis del Orr— enter his studio. "My dear Greuze, my daughter wishes very much to have her portrait painted by you. Can you come to-morrow?"—"I will," said Greuze. The next day, the poor painter found at the palace the Count Palleri, carelessly reclining in an arm-chair, at the side of Letitia. At the sight of Greuze, she blushed and sighed. "My daughter is married; did I forget to tell you?" said the duke, who conducted Greuze. The painter bowed, without saying a word.

During the progress of the portrait, Letitia twice found herself alone with him; the first time, he obtained from her a lock of her hair, the second, he asked for a farewell kiss, but he obtained only a tear.

The portrait finished, Greuze carried it to his studio, to give, he said, a final touch to the draperies and accessories; but the day after, he quitted Rome, carrying with him this masterpiece of art and of love. On arriving in France, he hastened to paint a pendant to this portrait. Letitia had not been able to drive away the image of Eleonora, the noble wife of Gromdon. Greuze had ever before his eyes those enchanting features which he had adored at twenty years of age. He painted Eleonora, therefore, from recollection; this portrait was as faithful as the other. At a later period, when he exhibited these two charming heads to the grand Duke and Duchess of Russia, the illustrious travellers offered him twenty thousand livres for them. "You could not pay me for them with all the riches of your empire," said he, turning pale.

Greuze could not resist often reproducing the form

of Letitia. In the *Embarras d'une couronne*, the young girl is Letitia; she is reclining on an altar consecrated to Love, where doves are pecking on a bed of flowers; she holds in one of her hands a crown of roses and myrtle, which she appears to desire, yet fears, to give.

Eight years after his return to France, Greuze received a letter from Letitia, a fragment of which Madame de Valori has printed: "Yes, my dear Greuze, your old pupil is now a good matron. I have five children whom I adore. My eldest daughter would be worthy of being presented as a model to your happy pencil; she is beautiful as an angel; ask the Prince d'Est— about her. My husband would make me believe that I am still young and pretty, so much does he still continue to love me. As I have told you, this happiness is your work; the respect which surrounds me, I owe to you. Thus, every day of my life, do I remind myself with a smile for you, that it was your generosity which prevented me from tearing my father's heart." It is time to give you the history of his first love, which Greuze only confided to Grétry and to Florian. The story intrusted to the poet has the most grace, and is most to the point. I shall therefore reproduce it after the hints given by Florian. Greuze had gone to join the young captain of dragoons at the chateau of Anet, to copy an old portrait of Diana of Poitiers. We are, therefore, at the chateau of Anet,one of the masterpieces of Philibert Delorme, if not a masterpiece of love, as a poet has said:—

> By love's command, this haughty structure rose:
> Here, by his cunning hand, with skill enlaced,
> Diana's ciphers may all yet be traced.

Now, the love in this place is Henry II. Greuze was enchanted with this chateau. "In truth," said he, to Florian, "you would think yourself a poet at Anet, or you would at least become one. See that beautiful portico, whose archivault presents us, in the midst of festoons, of dogs and wild boars, a beautiful figure of Diana, not the amorous Diana, but Diana, the huntress. "The clock which surmounts those four Doric columns is among the most ingenious," says Florian. "Twelve times a-day do the dogs run and bark at a stag who marks the hours with his foot. But let us enter the halls on the ground floor. Behold that saloon which appears designed for men of another age! What splendor and majesty! adorned everywhere with the magnificent marble of Languedoc! How well those beautiful infants bear those trophies! how well those Caryatides support those chimney-pieces. Let us pass to the guard-room. Here the ceiling displays to you the arms of Henry and Diana. The portrait, which you see on one side, my dear painter, is that of the Duke de Vendôme, celebrated for his conquests in love and war. Those four battle-pieces represent the great deeds of the duke."—"Let us pass on," said Greuze, "I like neither powder, noise, nor blood."

Greuze, more sensible to the magic of painting than to anything else, made more use of his eyes than of his ears. "If you wish to attend to your devotions," said Florian, "let us go to the chapel; it is a chapel which is somewhat profane; for there are statues of all kinds of divinities."—"Let us rather go to the fountain of Diana. See how the façade fronting the garden is decorated with all those busts

in white marble; but observe, above all, that garden which is at once the masterpiece of art and of nature. The garden of Versailles would suffer alongside of that of Anet. Besides, the river of Eure is there to to bathe us at pleasure. It is a true Chinese garden; we have waterfalls, prairies, cottages, and a delicious island, an island of love, where the Duke de Vendôme was wont to imprison his rebellious mistresses. But let us go on to the fountain. The entire portico is of rustic architecture; Diana, in white marble, is reclining at her ease on a pedestal, which is bathed by a magnificent jet in the form of a sheaf."—"We will often return to this fountain," said Greuze.

They went thence to the chapel of the tombs. At the first glance, Greuze saw the pale flame of a silver lamp which always burnt there. In the choir, under this lamp, he beheld four sphinxes of white marble, supporting a sarcophagus, on which Diana of Poitiers is represented on her knees, with her hands joined together before a prie-Dieu, on which is placed an open book. Do you know what book it was? what profane book in this sanctuary? It was Brantôme. The painter read aloud this passage of the historian of the *Gallant Dames:* "I saw her six months before her death, still so fair, that I do not know any heart of stone which would not have been moved. It is a pity that the earth covers so fair a body. She was very sweet-tempered, merciful, and liberal in alms. The people of France should pray God that never may come royal favorite worse than she, nor more of an evil-doer."—"Well," continued Greuze, "that is a funeral eu-

logy after a new fashion. A like eulogy from the pen of Brantôme, who was not a courtier, is well worth one by Bourdaloue, with whom it was a matter of business."—"This book," said Florian, "was opened here by the Duke de Vendôme, on the accession of Madame de Pompadour; it is thus rather a satire than a eulogy."

The painter and the poet went to breakfast, relating to one another what they knew of the history of Diana of Poitiers.

For several days, Greuze, more and more delighted with the place, could not find a single hour for painting. "Ah," said he, to the poet, "you are fortunate in being able to make a picture as you are walking along."

One evening, when they had both paused near the fountain of Diana, "Let us rest here," said Greuze. "I have just by chance recovered one of the most charming recollections of my youth; it is a blow which has struck me to the heart, you see me trembling all over. Ah, youth and love, the romance of life." Greuze seated himself on the grass. "I can very properly confide this to you, Monsieur Chevalier, for although you are a captain of dragoons, you understand something about the holiness of love. I was twenty years old; I was in the full flower of life; I expanded in the sunshine, I painted with delight both saints and sinners; and, besides, I was distractedly in love. Alas! with whom? My master's wife. She was a beautiful creature whom he had married near Vaucluse, in the country of love and beauty. The first time that I saw her come into the workshop, my pencil fell from my

hands; the second time, my heart beat violently, finally, a fatal love seized me at one grasp. I was then little more than a sign-painter; by her, grace and harmony were revealed to me as by enchantment. Some weeks passed before my heart dared to speak even in my looks; had it not been for a violet-slipper, I should, perhaps, never have spoken. One morning, it so happened, that as I was painting a small picture for the gloomy gallery of a Marquis de Hautbois, that she came into the studio in the most simple and lovely white *négligé* that I have ever seen; her magnificent ebon locks escaped from the comb in rebellious curls; her loosely-gathered corsage was but the more attractive on that account. She trailed along with lazy step in two violet slippers three times too large for her. All the while painting, I watched her from the corner of my eye in a scarce perceptible manner, but with all my soul. She came and leaned over me. 'What a beautiful picture,' said she, after casting an absent glance on my work. Her shoulder touched mine, her breath stirred my locks. I was losing my senses when my master's voice was heard. Eleonora slipped away like a bird, but her slipper remained on her track. I threw myself, like a fool, on this slipper, I kissed it with a quivering lip; I was so blinded by passion, that I did not see little Jeannette, the daughter of Eleonora, the same Jeannette who is now the wife of Grétry. The child, surprised at seeing me kiss her mother's slipper with so much warmth, ran off as fast as she could to tell her father; she thus informed Eleonora of my love. 'Greuze is a child,' said she, completely overcome.—'There are no longer any such things

as children,' said Gromdon, smiling to conceal his jealousy. The breakfast was a silent one. In the afternoon, little Jeannette came to me to ask, as the request of her mother, for the velvet slipper. I answered that I had not seen any slipper. The next day, fearing a domiciliary visit, I took the slipper with me as I went with my little picture to the gallery of the Marquis de Hautbois. I went to the end of the park, where I had the privilege of ruminating at my leisure; I hid my dear slipper in the foliage of a thicket (this one beside us reminded me of it just now). For more than a month, I returned every evening to the thicket; the marquis was at the Spa; I was not disturbed in my amorous and solitary wanderings, except by a good old fellow of a gardener, who wanted to prove to me a little too often that the roses which he cultivated were full as good as those which I painted. Happy time, the days passed like hours, the hours passed like golden dreams! Happy love! my heart only longed for a little quiet, a little obscurity, and a violet slipper. What do you say to that, my dear poet of the shepherdesses? Nemorin is a little Fronsac alongside of the Greuze of former times. The lost slipper, however, disquieted Eleonora; once, in the studio, as Gromdon was conducting a visiter to the door, she said to me, in a tone almost severe, 'Tell me, Greuze, where is my slipper?'—'In the marquis's garden,' said I, trembling; 'come and look for it there.'—'You are a fool, Greuze.' And as Gromdon closed the door, she sang in an adorable voice, '*Entendez-vous la cornemuse.*' Some days after, Gromdon set out for Puy, where he was to restore a

Mary Magdalen. He thought of taking me with him, but the journey would cost some dozen crowns, '*more than you are worth*,' as he told me. Jealousy was a little less expensive, all things considered. He, therefore, set out alone, and I sauntered in my happiest mood in my terrestrial paradise; Eve was always absent, but I had her slipper. Eleonora was descended in a direct line from our first mother; she was curious like all women, she went in her turn to the forbidden tree. One evening, one beautiful evening, like it is now, scarce here and there a cloud, a beautiful sunset, birds singing, bees intoxicating themselves in the calices of the lilies of the valley, I sighed with joy and love in my dear arbor, when I suddenly heard the sharp voice of little Jeannette. I peeped through the leaves and saw Madame Gromdon and her daughter in the pomegranate walk, the daughter bounding like a fawn, the mother sad and thoughtful, like a woman who was meditating with her heart. Ah! but she was beautiful in the pale twilight. What grace in her careless step! What angelic sweetness in her dreamy face! She was coming in my direction, but like a woman who does not know where she is going. The gardener, in passing by her, told her that I was in the arbor, thinking, doubtless, that she was looking for me. She went on without speaking. The good man had stopped with Jeannette; he gathered her some pomegranates with a paternal air; Jeannette delighted, let her mother go, and followed the old man. I, on my part, was still concealed in the foliage, like the serpent; every step of Eleonora's went to my heart. She came straight on; she was

about to enter. I seized the slipper and kissed it with new ardor. There was, perhaps, a little affectation in this action, for Eleonora could already see me, but has not the most noble love always some affectation? Madame Gromdon surprised me with my lips on her slipper; she would fain have laughed and ridiculed me, but, touched to the heart by this silent and romantic devotion, she smiled sadly. 'Madame,' said I, throwing myself at her feet, 'here is your slipper.'—She sighed, 'Come, my poor child, rise and let us say no more about it.' As she said this, she could not refrain from slipping her pretty fingers in the blonde curls of my hair; at twenty, I had the most beautiful hair in the world. I rose while kissing her hand; she felt burning tears fall on it with the kiss. Shall I tell you? Led away by my love, she leaned her beautiful head on my shoulder. 'Greuze,' said she, with a stifled voice, 'do not love me more, I entreat you, for it would be all lost. I do not love you; no, no, I do not love you; the heart is rebellious.'—'Yes, madame, alas! the heart is rebellious; I can not control it. But why seek to extinguish my love? It is my sole possession; it does no harm to any one, not even to you, madame.' Eleonora shook her head with a sigh. We were silent for some seconds. We heard the wind murmur in the foliage, the buzzing of the bee, the tender note of the bulfinch, but above all the beating of our hearts. I am almost an old man, but I would still give many days for seconds of that time blessed by Heaven. Eleonora trembled in every limb; I was subduing her by my love, but I scarce dared to touch her hair with my wandering lips. She at last

raised her head; she regarded me with ineffable sweetness; she wished to speak, but my mouth stopped her words. It was too much and too little; it was all. She tried to escape from my embrace, but I clung to her. 'Why should I not love you?' I passionately exclaimed. At this moment her daughter, who was coming toward us, gave a shrill cry. Her mother turned toward her: 'Why not love you?' said she; 'why not? There is an answer which God has sent me,' pointing to Jeannette with her finger. She left the arbor to rejoin her daughter. Scarcely had she passed out, when the sun, which was just sinking in the clouds on the horizon, threw a magic ray on her countenance which dazzled me, a holy halo which suddenly recalled to me the virgins of Raphael. Heaven had come to our help. Maternal love had triumphed. Until then, I had loved with culpable hopes; I had felt that the lips still search for love on the earth, while the soul is in heaven; but after that charming picture, my mouth closed without murmuring, my soul rose even to adoration. Eleonora was no longer a woman to me, she was the celestial image which God allows the poet to behold, the divine model which the great Painter on high sometimes exhibits to poor painters here below. I have often striven to reproduce this picture, this picture which is still all animate in my soul, but I have always faltered; my hand trembled, my heart obscured my sight; I did nothing which amounted to anything. None but a poet could succeed in seizing in his work the whole poetry of this scene."

Florian bowed.—"Your story has touched me; it

is a beautiful and a noble one."—"I abandon it to you," said Greuze.—"It is a precious legacy which will remain in my heart. But, to pay you in small change, here comes Agnes, quite apropos, to the fountain. That would furnish a bad idyl to me, why should it not serve you for a picture? Come, Monsieur Greuze, to work! Agnes is pretty; the landscape is fair; the fountain—" —"But your Agnes is not going to the fountain," said Greuze.—"Where the devil is she going, then?" asked Florian; "see, she has left her pitcher on the bank, and taken the path in the park: there is some lovemaking under this. I have found it out! M. de Penthièvre has summoned a young carver in wood to the chateau, who will be one of your friends, but who, in the meantime, is very tender upon Agnes. It is four o'clock; he has a habit of walking in the park at this hour. Agnes wishes to pass that way. May God guide her!" —"Where does this gentle Agnes come from?"—"She is the daughter of the gardener of Anet."—"On my faith, she is the freshest rose of the garden." —"Last year the duke saw fit to tell her that she was pretty: this gracious speech of a great lord has turned her head a little. If her father does not keep a close look-out, she will go a little too far." —"A young girl's path is not hard, but it is slippery." —"Do you see her down there, returning thoughtful and surprised?"—"Yes that devil of a sculptor has certainly taken some sweet kisses for his dessert."—"There is nothing to be said if he has; they are both young; love at seventeen is a blessing from heaven." —"She has taken up her pitcher, and is going along with a languor truly voluptuous. Why could I not

paint her so?"—"There would be something wanting to the picture."—"What, if you please?"—"The kiss taken in the park."—"The painter has his resources, too: I can indicate the kiss without trouble; I have only to paint a broken pitcher in the hand of Agnes."—"You would say too much by that; but it is an ingenious idea. So to work! Your picture will be called *The Broken Pitcher*."—"And, while I am painting this picture, you will write the story which I have related to you, the title of which will be *The Violet Slipper*. But what have I said? This is not a story; it is a confession. Take care not to profane it in a book."

You all know that Greuze painted *The Broken Pitcher;* you have all seen that charming face, which unites the smile of purity with the expression of love. Florian did not make a tale after his fashion out of *The Violet Slipper*. He often said, that after Greuze was dead, he should have a beautiful story to tell; but Florian died the first!

III.

To his sorrow, Greuze married: a marriage in citizen life, which seemed to promise days of peace, calm joys, all the little delights of the chimney-corner. This happy period lasted some six weeks. Madame Greuze was not as domestic as she appeared to be. She loved dearly the theatre, the minuet, and the snug supper-table. She began by ruining Greuze; she had her fine-lady caprices; she threw her money (so to speak) out of the window, to give herself the airs of a little marchioness. At last,

Greuze became a mere automaton in the hands of this woman. He tried to lead her in the right road: he made for this purpose two designs, which he called *The Barks of Good and Evil Fortune.* The allegory was as follows: In the first bark, which glided lightly along, at the pleasure of a gentle breeze, on a pure and calm lake, are seen a pair, smiling and joyful, who are to be man and wife. They are both rowing to reach an island covered with roses and myrtles, from which rises the Temple of Happiness. In the middle of the bark, two children are sporting, under the delighted eyes of the betrothed pair, who are subdued to a calm joy by the spectacle. To reach the fortunate isle, it is needful to avoid an abyss (you can guess what one); the passage is perilous: but, thanks to the harmony of the two rowers, the danger is soon overcome. Once out of peril, Love appears above the prow, animates the couple, and smiles on their happiness. In the second bark, it is another story: do not look for the representation of happiness, for happiness is far enough off from that. Instead of a clear sky and a calm lake, we have a tempest; but it is the same sky and the same lake, nevertheless.

The wind whistles, the floods rise, the lightning flashes, and the thunderbolts fall on the Temple of Happiness, of which we see only the ruins. The waves, in their fury drive the luckless bark toward the precipice. The poor husband, unaided, exhausts himself in vain efforts to avoid the abyss; his enfeebled hands can scarcely hold the oars; the helm is broken; there is no hope for him. The wife is seated carelessly on the opposite bench, she inclines her head and smiles over some culpable reminiscence

which conceals from her the danger, or rather consoles her for the danger. Before her eyes her two children are fighting, in rags, for a crust of black bread; she does not see them; her heart is elsewhere, or rather she has no heart. Love, whose torch is extinguished, is sadly flying far away from the bark, which is about to sink.

Madame Greuze was not edified by these two designs. "You are most innocently simple in your allegory," said she to the painter, "your temple of happiness is ill-placed, if it was found in the middle of a beautiful fête by Madame Dubarry, it would do very well — but there, on that desert island, it is a mere air-castle. What do you mean by the whirlpool?"—"I intend to remind you that you should not engulf my honor therein." Madame Greuze burst out laughing: "Truly you are a man of the golden age. Be easy, monsieur, row away without disquietude, the helm shall not go wrong."

Diderot, a true friend to Greuze, was unfortunately too much a friend of Madame Greuze. I do not mean by this that he carried friendship too far; others, however, have written so. Hear Diderot himself, who says somewhat unceremoniously: "Greuze is enamored with his wife. He is right. I have loved her very much myself, I who address you, when I was young, and she called herself Mademoiselle Babut, in her little book-shop on the Quai des Augustins. The plump little thing, white and straight as a lily, red-cheeked as the rose. I entered with the lively, ardent, and foolish manner I then had. 'Mademoiselle, la Fontaine's Tales, and a Petronius, if you please.'—'Here they are, sir; is there

anything else you wish?' [I omit four lines of Diderot's which he would have done well to have omitted himself.] When I returned to the quai, she smiled and I as well. What a pretty smile! Greuze is in love then with his wife: by painting her continually, he has the appearance of saying not only, '*See how beautiful she is*,' but also, '*Behold her charms*.' I behold them, Monsieur Greuze." At the time he wrote this, Diderot had fallen out with Greuze. He therefore spoke of him, as "M. Greuze," or "my late friend Greuze."

Poor Greuze, alas! was not blind; he read Molière to console himself; he ended by taking his revenge like a brave fellow: he revenged himself right and left for his wife's errors; he became a man of gallantry. He went into the fine world in the full attire of a petit-maître, the finest laces decorated his shirt and wrists; precious stones sparkled on his fingers. He carried a magnificent sword in cavalier style, he was gallant *beyond measure*, says Grimm, he had an ever-ready wit. He was soon in universal demand; the strife was, who should see this person at once so noble and simple, in whom wit and sentiment struggled for the mastery. The Duchess de Bourbon summoned him to her fêtes: "I do not dare to offer you my protection; you are a duke after your fashion, so come here as a duke." Greuze did not forget for all this to study. He often, instead of going to play the lion at some celebrated hotel where he was already styled M. de Greuze, frequented the small theatres, the boulevards, and wine-shops; he extended his artistic pilgrimages sometimes into the country, with Lemière, or some one

else. Lemière was sure to see nothing but his tragedy-scenes, or pictures for epics; while he was searching for rhymes, Greuze was on the look-out for sentiment. Greuze went everywhere, even into the cowhouse, where the peasant-girl was milking. In his pictures of village-life, how everything recalls to you the thatched roof! There is a piece of bread on the table in the *Village Bride*, the golden bread, which is just out of the oven, gives you a real country appetite. In one of their country excursions, Lemière said to him one day: "I have just hit on a line, and such a line, *The trident of Neptune is the sceptre of the world.* Is not that sublime? It is the line of the age."—"It is not so badly done," said Greuze, smiling; "but that sublime line prevented your seeing a pretty housewife in a white bodice, with her neckerchief flying in the wind, on the doorstep of that little cottage there, giving alms to a beggar; that seems to me much better poetry."

Greuze had the volatile nature of the poets; his heart fluttered with every breeze, his soul was stirred by every bit of poetry; he had loves and friendships innumerable, giving to both all that he could give. He was prodigal during his whole life, of the riches of his heart. Grétry held his fast with both hands. Greuze loved the first man he came across, and sometimes too, the first woman, consoling himself for a deceitful friendship in a faithless love. The days passed quickly with such a man; he saw them fly past with his happy carelessness, fancying to himself that the sun would always shine. He had the charming simplicity of a little child, and the vanity of a young girl. He often recalled La Fontaine. He marched

straight forward, disdaining devious paths. Like a man of sincerity, he spoke of himself with enthusiasm. "Do not find fault," wrote D'Alembert, "for if Greuze exclaims what a beautiful thing I shall make of this, be sure that it is genius which speaks, and genius keeps its word." Diderot said of his vanity: "It is that of an infant, it is the intoxication of inspiration. If you take from him that simplicity which makes him say of his *Fair Weeper* or his *Village Bride*, 'Look at that, there is something choice,' you would take from him his force, you would extinguish his fire, his genius would be eclipsed." False modesty is the worst of virtues in the arts; it is like the shameless woman who wears a veil to attract the notice of passers-by. Greuze kept good faith with others as with himself, he always defended the good things of his friends and of his enemies; thus when the *Deluge* of Girodet appeared: "It is at the most," said a journalist, "the powerful effort of a scholar."—"Say rather of a master," exclaimed Greuze with warmth. He was the first to predict the genius of Prudhon. "He will go farther than I have done," he often said; "he will stalk over these two centuries with seven-league boots." Although he played the ignoramus marvellously, he knew a great deal; a choice spirit always makes progress; he may be ignorant of what everybody has a smattering of, as of Greek; but be sure that, that mind has gained in good humane philosophy what it has lost in bad science, in living speech what it has lost in a dead tongue. Greuze, who in many respects reminds one of La Fontaine as I have just said, has imagined almost all the fables which the Duke de

Nivernais has put in verse; he has even written a philosophical romance, which has remained unpublished, entitled *Bazile and Thibaud.* It was said in society, after a reading by Greuze, that it was the last chapter of the *Emile;* but that is but an opinion of some of the fashionable world. With men, Greuze was somewhat silent, whether it was that he disdained paradoxes, or that he was badly armed for defence; but with women, he talked a great deal, enlivening his talk with all the flowers of gallantry and flattery. The madrigal had in his mouth a new grace, a curious originality. The Duchess de Bourbon wrote, "A woman is a sacred being to Greuze; his delicate and poetical gallantry reminds us of the noble age of Francis I." Unfortunately, he was a little too much of a lover of beauty, he sought it everywhere, high and low. He must have encountered Duclos sometimes, but it is the fault of our handsome women who never sit but for portraits. Although badly married, Greuze cried out against bachelors. "They are," said he, "poachers on marriage." He had cause of complaint against them, doubtless. His daughter, however, consoled him for his wife, when he had time to seek for consolation. What appears strange, is, that Greuze, the most volatile of lovers, always came back loving to his wife. "Come, you wicked one," said he to her, pressing her hand, "you have had a devil in you, but my love has exorcised it." The devil went off for a week, but it returned more seductive than ever. The empress of Russia summoning Greuze to her court, he might have freed himself from his wife, he might have escaped want which already pressed upon him, but he had com-

passion on his unworthy wife, and wished to protect her to the end, in spite of her errors.

By his sincerity, his noble pride, Greuze lost many favors. In 1765, not only had his country done nothing for him, but the Academy of painting had not yet bethought itself of his existence! In the saloon of 1765, he exhibited the *Young Girl weeping for her Bird*, and the *Little Girl holding a Wooden Capuchin*. Vernet was walking in the gallery, with the Marquis of Marigny, who was a redoubtable critic, although a marquis. The two promenaders found a man ia admiration before the *Fair Weeper* of Greuze. Can you guess who he was? Greuze himself. Until then, the marquis had found a great deal of fault. This picture surprised him; "It is beautiful," said he with enthusiasm. Greuze replied: "I know that very well, Monsieur the Marquis, but with all that I am none the richer."—"My friend Greuze," said Vernet to him, "it is because you have a swarm of enemies, and among them is one who appears to love you to distraction, but who will ruin you."—"Who is he?"—"Yourself. Yes, my friend, you have done unpardonable wrongs to your fortune. You have imagined that it was only necessary to have genius and a proud and sensitive spirit, to secure success, while a supple back is needed to excuse your genius; with such a back, you would have a residence at the Louvre, like the princes of painting, pensions of divers kinds, and perhaps the cordon of St. Michael. Trust me, cease to be a great painter, and the Academy will quickly sing your praises."—"What would you have of me?" said Greuze, extending his hand

to Vernet; "it is so natural for me to have talent, and so difficult to bend the back. I am a man of the old times. I bow only to the women."—"Then beg the women to make your fortune."

Diderot came up; before saluting the two painters and the marquis, he paid his respects to Greuze's picture.—"Beautiful elegy! charming poem! What a beautiful idyl Gessner would make out of this! Most graceful maiden, I salute you!" And turning: How do you do, gentlemen? what were you discussing?"—"Greuze is complaining of fortune," said Vernet.—"Greuze," replied Diderot, "will always be a beggar like me, but what matters that? do not his pictures make their fortunes."—Four years afterward, Greuze was admitted into the Academy. He was desirous of taking his seat among the historical painters: with this intention, he painted a sufficiently bad picture, the *Emperor Severus reproaching his son Caracalla, for having wished to assassinate him.* Greuze was wanting in style and character for such a subject: he failed, or came very near it, and was ranked by the academicians among the painters of familiar life. Greuze retired in a pique from the Academy: he made epigrams against it, after the style of those of Piron against the other Academy, minus the rhyme. He did not choose to exhibit his pictures at the Louvre any longer. He had his saloon at home.—"There are only illuminations at their exhibition; you will find pictures in my studio."—In France no one ever takes the part of the Academy: the people amused themselves with the quips of Greuze. Everybody ran after him: princes, men of letters, great ladies. The strife was, who should revenge them-

selves on the Academy. At last, in spite of the Academy, he was appointed painter to the king.

The Academy was in the right, nevertheless; Greuze was not an historical painter. He knew nothing about the Greeks or Romans; he understood neither kings nor heroes; he had neither a great style, nor depth of color, nor rich treatment of accessories; but he understood marvellously well how to give expression to the passions of common life. The drama of Diderot and the idyl of Gessner are his range; within this he might sit at his ease, as a painter of genius. His *Village Bride* stands by itself. It is more than a drama or an idyl; it is almost a page of the Bible; there is a religious gravity in it which recalls the first ages of the world. The *St. Mary of Egypt* is the most severe work of Greuze. It is more than a picture; it is St. Mary herself, in her corporeal splendor, in that human and divine beauty which Voltaire would say made men imagine the angels. The penitent who has taken refuge in a wild rocky solitude, is clothed by her long hair, but, above all, by her modesty and her repentance. Greuze has not been able to refrain from shedding over her mouth and eyes a tinge of voluptuousness which is a souvenir of the world and its passions. It is a magical picture: the spectator returns repeatedly to it, as to a mistress in tears, as to a love which one has lost for ever. The painter has taken two models for the face, Eleanora and Letitia: hence comes the divinely-loving charm of this picture. Greuze said, in the bad style of the time: "*I dipped my pencil in my heart.*"

I can not here write the description of all Greuze's

works, but must recognise and admire the color, which only sins now and then by the use of too much white or too much red, the picturesque disposition of figures, but especially the sentiment which predominates over all. The painter has almost always *dipped his pencil in his heart.* At the same time, the negligence of the drawing must be condemned. The somewhat uniform stiffness which gives to some of his paintings the appearance of copies of sculpture; the theatrical affectation of some scenes; the meagerness of the draperies. But, after all, without being a great painter, Greuze holds a better place in the memory of the world than many great painters, because he was an original painter. Originality should be the touchstone of all true artists. How many painters study Raphael all their lives without discovering the soul of painting, the soul which Greuze discovered one fine morning, in adoring Eleanora, in loving Letitia!

Greuze, Wilkie, and Leopold Robert, have almost taken possession of one entire domain of painting. In this domain, Wilkie paints Nature as she is, without caring about effect or sentiment; he is simply and purely a painter, a copyist, but a marvellous copyist, who possesses all the secrets of the Creator. Greuze, who was a little spoiled by Diderot, could not refrain from working at dramatic effect and philosophy, sometimes even melodrama; he had a true eye for nature, but not finding everything in it to his taste, he cultivates it, he strives after arrangement and scenic effect; so that his personages are actors; it is no use for them to put on simple airs, they are all posturing a little. Leopold Robert looked at nature under

a most serene sky; as a poet, as he said himself, instead of painting in prose, he painted in verse.

Greuze has sacrificed his draperies too much to his figures — or rather it would be more just to say simply, that he had too much neglected drapery. He labored under the error of thinking that if his draperies were more elaborate, his flesh tints would have less effect. The splendor and beauty of drapery should not strike the eye too prominently; but do the draperies of Titian and Vandyck, which are masterpieces of taste and labor, injure their heads? There is a supreme harmony in the arts, which can not be departed from without injury. Like Watteau, Boucher, and Vanloo, Greuze has too often repeated the same style of head, whether in painting a peasant-girl or a dame of fashion, a saint or a sinner. All original painters, however, always fall into this error; they have an ideal of beauty which preserves, and at the same time misleads them, since they pursue their mirage till their eyes are completely dazzled.

The most original painter of the eighteenth century, after Watteau, is Greuze. There is a certain family likeness, besides, between these two painters. If Watteau's peasants are the peasants of a comedy, are not Greuze's sometimes those of a melo-drama? Watteau enchants us on his stage, Greuze touches us on his; despite certain grimaces, Greuze has warmth and sensibility; he carries the beholders with him, who feel rather the effect than the truth of the scene before them. That which first strikes the attention in the figures and colors of Greuze, is a certain voluptuous air thrown over the whole, the *fête* air of Watteau. Greuze loved womankind passionately.

Watteau loved the opera to infatuation. This is the whole secret. Watteau only attracts the eyes and speaks to the imagination. Greuze attracts the eyes and speaks to the heart. A critic has remarked very properly, that the painter of the *Broken Pitcher* has given a sort of voluptuous air to his representations of virtue. In fact, Greuze even in his purest works awakes a sentiment in us which is more earthly than austere. It is the very feeling of his age. But are not the best historians of the eighteenth century the painters? painters who cared little, too, about painting historical pictures. The learned will never find more reliable annals than the canvasses of Watteau, Rigaud, La Tour, Boucher, the Vanloos. The eighteenth century terminated with the Revolution, David is a painter of the nineteenth.

IV.

Will it be believed? This charming painter who had seen the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Russia, Louis XVI., General Bonaparte, the king of the world, a king of Sweden, an emperor of Germany, and I know not how many great people, seated on the stools of his studio, Greuze who was the last to preserve on his pencil the lost smile of his age, this thoroughly French painter, whose works would still, at the present day, make the fortune of ten painters, died poor and alone, amidst the most glorious days of France. David, who had caused him to be forgotten, had forgotten him himself. After 1789, the eighteenth century had nothing more to do or to say. France had just reawakened in a new

world, it was no use to trouble one's self about *Village Brides* or *Broken Pitchers;* people no longer married or broke pitchers at the well. The three great features of the age, were the war, the tribune, and the guillotine. "This is no longer in my province," said Greuze with horror. The poor painter might have chosen to die of terror like his friend Florian, had he not had a daughter. She seemed to live but for him, he to live for her. He therefore passed with resignation through the stirring dramas of the Revolution, finding a refuge from the tumult in labor, and amusing himself a little with the sudden great men of the tribune. "Citizen Homer and Citizen Raphael," said he, "will live quite as long as these celebrated citizens whose names I do not know." He inhabited, thanks to I do not know whom, a corner of the Louvre; this neighborhood to the Tuileries made him ask every morning: "My child, who is king to-day?" He always preserved his calm cheerfulness, the thought of leaving his daughter without fortune being the only thing which made him sad. Feeling his death approaching, he seized his pencil, he had a final inspiration. "No no," said he, "I do not wish to die without leaving my poor Caroline something." He passed his last days in painting her portrait and his own. His portrait was the best in the exhibition of 1805. People were astonished at the vigor of a painter of eighty —the head is as bold and true as one of Rembrandt's; it is not so proud or so beautiful, but possesses that soft sentiment which animates all Greuze's heads. Do you know what Caroline did with this portrait, her father's sole legacy? "You will sell it for a

hundred louis," he had said to her. She kept her father's portrait and sold her own. There is nothing surprising in this little incident, but it ought to console fathers who have nothing besides their name to leave to their children.

Meanwhile Greuze had kept his bed for some days; it was all over with him, he had no more strength for the contest. Barthelémy alone came to bid him farewell. "Well, Greuze."—"Well, my friend, I begin to know what is death. If you ever wish to paint death, imagine to yourself a wicked mother who puts her children to sleep to free herself from them. I am beginning to know no longer what I am saying; but patience, I shall soon say nothing at all."—"Come, come, courage, one does not die the first spring day."—"Good heavens, since the sans-culottides, I know nothing about seasons. Are we in Ventose, or Germinal? Is to-day St. Dandelion or St. Asparagus' day?"—"What matter. See what a beautiful sky."—"I am quite easy about my journey; I shall expect you at my funeral; you will be all alone, like the poor man's dog."

Greuze died toward evening, after having wandered a little in his mind, his last word was, however, a prayer for his daughter. Mademoiselle Greuze, after having passed the night watching by the bedside, went in tears to seek her father's friends. "He will be buried to-morrow," said she to all. The next day, however, no one was seen at the funeral but Barthelémy, *the poor man's dog*, as the deceased had called him, a bon-mot, which is worth as much as a picture for this painter without genius. Greuze was revenged on his faithless friends, revenged by a

woman who came during the mortuary mass and placed a wreath on the modest coffin. "It was very appropriate," says the *Journal of the Empire*, "that a woman, in the name of all her sex, should offer this tribute of admiration on the tomb of the celebrated artist, who had almost always consecrated his genius to their service."

The announcement of the death of Greuze caused great surprise all over Paris; they thought that he had died long ago. "What! Greuze was not dead?" —"He has just died very poor, and very wretched." —"Why did he not let me know?" muttered Bonaparte, "I would have given him the proceeds of a victory."—"I would have given him the price of one of my pictures," said David. It is always, when the time has gone by for us to do a good action, that the doors of our hearts fly wide open. With all their good will, David and Bonaparte soon forgot that the daughter of Greuze was without resources. This noble girl took up at the same time the needle and the pencil; she lived alone without other support, together with the friendship of Madame de Valori. Poor as she was, she still sacrificed to her father's memory. From the first blossom of spring to the first frost of autumn, the painter's tomb was a little garden cheerful with roses. "These roses shall bloom," said she, "as long as I live." I have visited this tomb, which I found with great difficulty; there are no longer roses and crowns; it is death without the remembrance of life. A little dry grass, a heap of dead leaves, the shade of the neighboring cypresses, were all that I saw. Where art thou, noble daughter of Greuze?

MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

I.

HER PORTRAIT — HUSBAND. — THE KING.

There is at the Louvre a pastel by La Tour, representing Madame de Pompadour, in all the brilliancy of her glory and her beauty. The marchioness is seated near a table covered with books, among which may be distinguished *The Spirit of the Laws*, and the *Encyclopædia*.—These two memorable works appeared during her reign.—An open book exhibits an engraving, representing Guay sculpturing a head of either Louis XV. or his mistress. The hair of the marchioness is dressed in the style of the day, and slightly powdered; her dress is an open robe, with a full train; she has upon her feet silk slippers with heels, fit for the feet of an oriental beauty. Her neck is proudly sustained; her head is a marvel of coquettish beauty, delicate and graceful; her forehead is high and rigid; her lips slightly closed, have a firm and somewhat satirical expression; her eyes are brilliant, her nose perfect. There is in every

feature an air of nobility and even of dignity, which the recollection of the *petits soupers* at Versailles somewhat diminishes. The color of her face is fresh and delicate. At the sight of this masterpiece of magical beauty, we begin to understand Louis XV.—yes, Louis XV. abandoning France for the Marchioness de Pompadour!

Louis XV., the son of a king, was born a farmer-general: that is to say, to sup well, love the women, pleasure, and money. Madame de Pompadour, the daughter of a farmer-general, was born a queen, loving power, luxury, the fine arts, everything that belongs to the splendor of royalty.

Women in France have always protested against the Salic law, from Frédégonde to Madame de Pompadour. The faithful historian who wishes to learn the lessons of human philosophy is obliged to study rather the power of the women than that of the men, in its influence upon France.

The history of Madame de Pompadour is unknown in its details; it is, however, a name that radiates upon the past century with more brightness than the name of Louis XV.

A great deal has been written about her.* Some

* Some apocryphal memoirs of her were published at Liège, in 1768. These memoirs do not give us any information. It is not a woman who speaks, but a loquacious politician.

In 1765 there appeared in London a volume with the title: *Genuine History of the Marchioness de Pompadour, Mistress to the French King, and First Lady of the bedchamber to his Queen: containing the Secret Memoirs of the Court of France, from her first coming into power to her Death.* It was the translation of a work by a *Bohemian*, an old nun, celebrated for her romantic adventures and her gallantries, Mademoiselle Fouque. This life of Madame de Pompadour was published in Holland; but the French embassador bought

have exalted her virtues; others have exaggerated her crimes. Both are in error. A courtier and a disappointed applicant for favors are neither of them historians when they write. With a little patience, studying at leisure the writers of the eighteenth century, it is possible to catch, here and there, a faithful feature of her charming face. But how fathom the depths of the dark ambition of her heart, which wore the mask of a perpetual smile! Ask Vanloo, La Tour, Boucher, if they could ever, when she sat for her portrait, detect any of the secrets of her love or her policy.

Madame de Pompadour was born in Paris, in 1720. She always said it was 1722. It is affirmed, that Poisson, her father, at least the husband of her mother, was a suttler in the army; some historians state that he was the butcher of the Hospital of the Invalides, and was condemned to be hung; according to Voltaire, she was the daughter of a farmer of Fertésous-Jouarre. What matters it, since he who was truly a father to her was the farmer-general Lenor-

up the whole edition, but this did not prevent the book from being republished elsewhere as is usual.

In 1772 the letters of Madame de Pompadour were published at Paris; some of them are hers, others are attributed to Crébillon the Gay, and with some reason; for he lived a long time on terms of intimacy with the marchioness, and besides, the letters are in the same style as the romances of the author of the *Sofa*.

In 1802, the Abbé Soulavie published his *Historical Memoirs of the Court of France during the Influence of Madame de Pompadour*. These memoirs contain some curious pages, some truths, a great number of falsehoods. But, as the Abbé Soulavie had seen Madame de Pompadour, he has occasionally written with due knowledge.

Finally, in 1824, there appeared the memoirs of Madame du Hausset, *femme-de-chambre* to Madame de Pompadour. This is a not very satisfactory apology for the marchioness.—We will not allude to the various historians of all kinds, who have judged her *en passant*.

mant de Tourneheim. This gentleman, thinking her worthy of his fortune, took her to his home, and brought her up, as if she had been his own daughter. He gave her the name of Jeanne-Antoinette. She bore till she was sixteen years of age this sweet name of Jeanne. From her infancy, she exhibited a passion for music and drawing. All the first masters of the day were summoned to the hotel of Lenormant de Tourneheim. Her masters did not disgust Jeanne with the fine arts of which she was so fond. Her talent was soon widely known. Fontenelle, Voltaire, Duclos, and Crébillon, who were received at the hotel as men of wit, went about everywhere talking of her beauty, her grace, and talent.

Madame de Pompadour was an example of a woman that was both handsome and pretty; the lines of her face possessed all the harmony and elevation of a creation of Raphael's; but instead of the elevated sentiment with which that great master animated his faces, there was the smiling expression of a Parisian woman. She possessed in the highest degree all that gives to the face, brilliancy, charm, and sportive gayety. No lady at court had then so noble and coquettish a bearing, such delicate and attractive features, so elegant and graceful a figure. Her mother used always to say: "A king alone is worthy of my daughter." Jeanne had an early presentiment of a throne; at first, from the ambitious longings of her mother; afterward, because she believed that she was in love with the king. "She confessed to me," says Voltaire, in his Memoirs, "that she had a secret presentiment that the king would fall in love with her, and that she had a violent in-

clination for him." There is a time in life when destiny reveals itself. All those who have succeeded in climbing the rugged mountain of human vanity relate that, from their earliest youth, dazzling visions revealed to them their future glory.

Well, how was the throne of France to be reached, the very idea of which made her head turn? In the meantime, full of genius, always admired, and always listened to, she familiarized herself with the life of a beautiful queen; she saw at her feet all the worshippers of the fortune of her father; she gathered about her, poets, artists, and philosophers, over whom she already threw a royal protection.

The farmer-general had a nephew, Lenormant d'Etioles. He was an amiable young man, and had the character and manners of a gentleman; he was heir to the immense fortune of the farmer-general, at least according to law. Jeanne, on her side, had some claim to a share of this fortune. It was a very simple way of making all agreed, by marrying the young people. Jeanne, as we have seen, was already in love with the king; she married D'Etioles without shifting her point in view: Versailles, Versailles, that was her only horizon. Her young husband became desperately enamored of her; but this passion of his, which amounted almost to madness, she never felt in the least. She received it with resignation, as a misfortune that could not last long.

The hotel of the newly-married couple, *Rue-Croix-des-Petits-Champs*, was established on a lordly footing; the best company in Paris left the fashionable *salons* for that of Madame d'Etioles; until that time, there had never been such a gorgeous display

of luxury in France. The young bride hoped by this means to make something of a noise at court, and thus excite the curiosity of the king. Day after day passed away in feasts and brilliant entertainments. Celebrated actors, poets, artists, and foreigners, all made their rendezvous at this hotel, the mistress of which was its life and ornament; all the world went there, in one word, except the king.

Since the hotel Rambouillet, there have always been, in France, certain circles made up of people of talent presided over by some fashionable woman. Louis XIV. detested these reunions; he used to say that his court distributed itself among the hotels of Paris. In fact, for most of the world, the circles of the Duchess de Maine, or the Marchioness of Lambert, of Madame de Tencin, or Madame Geoffrin, had more attraction than all the superannuated fêtes of Versailles. Did Louis XIV. foresee the French Revolution? It began in those circles, where the potentates of the earth were somewhat laughed at; philosophy and liberty had always free sway there. Thus, there were to be seen, at the house of Madame Lenormant d'Etioles, the aged Fontenelle, who did not believe anything, not even his own heart; Voltaire, still young, armed in full with his wit, ready to make war against those whose dominion was of this world, especially the Jesuits; Montesquieu and Maupertuis, born satirists and skeptics; and some other well-tempered minds, that saw the decline of royalty and religion, when Louis XIV., on the eve of death, allowed the widow of Scarron, Madame Maintenon, to muffle France in a san-benito, when Philippe d'Orleans, born a free-thinker, though born

on a throne, had already torn the mask in the saturnalia he held in the style of a Roman emperor. The Abbé Bernis was the abbé of Madame d'Etioles' hotel (he had no other abbey or benefice). Did the abbé and the mistress of the hotel suspect that, in ten years from that time, they would rule over France, as ministers with absolute power?* There was also, among this celebrated circle, a good-looking and good-natured pagan, who went by the name of Gentil-Bernard. Madame d'Etioles treated him like a child; he was the La Fontaine without genius, of a Sablière without virtue. It was thought he was in some degree her lover; he did not become minister with her; but as she had, whatever may be said, the memory of the heart, she made him librarian to the king. It is well known that the king never opened a book; we are told that Bernard never put his foot into the library.

Madame d'Etioles passed in the world for a virtuous wife. She swore eternal fidelity to her husband, provided the king did not make love to her. The husband was the first to laugh at this reservation.

* According to Marmontel, the Abbé de Bernis did not become acquainted with Madame de Pompadour until she was received in the favor of the king. Marmontel gives the following relation in the fifth book of his memoirs: "He learned that at the hunting rendezvous, in the forest of Sénart, the beautiful Madame d'Etioles had been the object of the king's attentions. The abbé immediately solicits permission to go and pay his court to the young lady, and the Countess d'Estrade, who was an acquaintance of his, obtains this favor for him. He arrives at Etioles by water, with his meager baggage; he is asked to recite his poems; he pleases; he does his best to make himself agreeable; he so far succeeds, that, in the absence of the king, he is admitted to the secrets of the correspondence between the two lovers. Nothing suited his character and the turn of his mind better than this kind of office."—This version is curious, but Marmontel is doubtless in error.

It was first talked about at home in their house; the rumor got abroad; it reached Versailles. But the king, wishing to joke in his turn, contented himself with saying: "I would like to see her husband."

Monsieur d'Etioles had a deserted chateau in the forest of Senart; Madame d'Etioles, having heard that the king often hunted in that forest, told her husband that the physicians had recommended the air of the forest for her nervous attacks.

Her husband, who did not foresee the design of his wife, furnished the chateau with great luxury. Once installed in their new quarters, Madame d'Etioles ordered three or four coaches of a light, fairy-like build, in order to take the air for the benefit of her attacks of the vapors. As she was always on the watch, she often met the king in the forest; at first the king passed without noticing her, then he remarked her fine horses. "What a beautiful phaeton!" said he, meeting it for the third time. Finally, he noticed herself, but confined himself to an observation on her beauty.

One afternoon, Louis XV. was overtaken by a storm while hunting in the forest. He entered the chateau d'Etioles; but Madame de Châteauroux was with him.

Madame d'Etioles was not disheartened; she continued to pass before the eyes of the royal hunter, "sometimes like a goddess descended from heaven, at one time dressed in an azure robe, seated in a rose-colored phaeton, at another, dressed in rose color, in an azure phaeton."* Does it not sound like a fairy

* Soulavie. *Historical Memoirs of the Court of France during the Influence of Madame de Pompadour.*

tale or an oriental novel? At a later day, Madame de Pompadour, in recalling all these follies, serious matters they were to her, said to the Prince de Soubise: "It is like reading a strange book; my life is an improbable romance; I do not believe it."

At Etioles, there were private theatricals; Madame d'Etioles was the Clairon, Camargo, and Dangeville of this theatre, the company of which was composed of the most illustrious personages, as the Duke de Nivernais and the Duke de Duras.

Maréchal de Richelieu, who went to every place where gallantry flourished, was a constant attendant at this charming theatre. Madame d'Etioles did her best to get the king behind the scenes. But the king, always kept in sight by Madame de Châteauroux, never once went there.

Madame d'Etioles passed two summers without obtaining anything from the king but a careless glance. For an ambitious woman, this was not enough; she returned to Paris at the end of the season, determined to change her mode of attack. Madame de Châteauroux was dead, the throne was vacant, there was not an hour to lose, for under Louis XV., *the queen is dead, long live the queen!*

In December, 1744, there were some fêtes at the Hotel de Ville; the women were masked; Madame d'Etioles approached the king: "Sire, will you interpret for me, if you please, a strange dream that I have had: I dreamed that I sat upon a throne for one day."—"And one night," said the king, who loved a joke.—"I would not assert," replied Madame Lenormant d'Etioles, "that it was the throne of France; however, I will venture to state, that it

was a throne covered with purple, gold, and diamonds; this dream torments me, it is the joy and the worry of my life. Sire, have the goodness to interpret it for me."—"The interpretation is quite easy; but you must first doff that velvet mask."—"You have seen me."—"Where?"—"In the forest of Sénart."—Then said the king, "You will understand why I would like to see you again." As the result of this conversation, described in a letter of the Marquis de Marigny, the first rendezvous of the king and Madame d'Etioles was at the hotel in the *Rue-Croix-des-Petits-Champs.* The king was accompanied by two of his courtiers; perhaps, they were the Duke de Richelieu and the Duke de Gontaud. The two courtiers paid their court to Madame Poisson, who always lived with her daughter; the king, under the pretence of admiring the drawings of Madame d'Etioles, walked with her through her apartments. As for Monsieur d'Etioles, he was absent on the king's service.

According to some biographers, the first rendezvous was at Versailles; Madame d'Etioles was seated upon the throne from the evening until the next morning; but as soon as the sun arose, the king bid her farewell, according to his usual custom. However that may be, it is quite certain that after the first interview a whole month passed, without her hearing anything from Louis XV. Her grief was extreme; she waited, she waited; she could not thus exist any longer. Every noise, every movement, she thought was a despatch from Versailles; the hours passed at the same time too fast and too slow. The king had forgotten her. Upon what do the destinies

of a nation hang? The weakness of human passion! She who was for nearly twenty-four years the mistress of the king and the sovereign of France, commenced her career by being forgotten and abandoned! Finally, one day the king said to his valet, that he was *ennuyéd*.—"By-the-by, Binet, that woman!"—"Indeed, sire, she is, no doubt, still more *ennuyéd* than even your majesty."—"Do you think so?"—"She passes her days in weeping."—"Well, then, go and tell her I will wipe away her tears."—Madame d'Etioles returned. The king found in her more charms than at the first interview, for on the next morning when the sun arose, she remained upon the throne.

According to another version, Madame d'Etioles arrived at Versailles all in a fright. She asked for the king. An attendant of the court, Monsieur de Bridge, who had participated in the pleasures of Madame d'Etioles, during the last season, conducted her to the presence of Louis XV.—"Sire, I am lost for ever! My husband knows of my glory and my misfortune! I come to beg of you a refuge. . . . If you do not protect me against his rage, I must die!" *

* In *The Gallery of the Ancient Court*, edition of 1788, the first meeting of the king and Madame de Pompadour is thus related: It was at the Hotel de Ville, at one of the extremities of the hall; in an alcove, where all the citizen beauties were assembled. The king approaching the alcove, was remarking and suggesting to his courtiers the remark, that the women of this class were more beautiful and better dressed than the ladies of the court, when a mask, separating herself from this charming group, began teasing the monarch (I quote literally). After having aroused by her enticements the curiosity of the king, the lady yielded to his entreaties, and unmasked herself, but with a refinement of coquetry, she at the same moment thrust herself in the crowd, without being lost to view. She had then a handkerchief in her hand, which she let fall; Louis XV. picked it up and threw it at

It is known that Louis XV. passed a life of constant *ennui*.—"The people are suffering," said the Duke de Choiseul to him one day.—"I am *ennuyéd*," answered the king. Madame d'Etioles established her empire by varying the life of her royal lover, by means of hunting-parties, promenades, fêtes, theatrical representations, suppers. In the first place, she had the art of metamorphosing herself every hour in the day. No one knew better than she did how to vary the play of her features: at one time she was as languishing and sentimental as a Madonna in a heavenly revery; at another she was as full of life, as gay, and coquettish as a Spanish girl. She had to a wonderful degree the gift of tears: she displayed so much art in weeping well, that she gave to her tears, says a poet, the value of pearls. Whoever saw her in the morning, proud, imperious, a queen, in all the splendor of her power, found her in the evening sportive, giddy, a madcap; presiding over her little suppers, with the spirit and attractiveness of an actress after the play. The Abbé Soulavie, who saw her often, has left behind him a finished portrait of her: "Besides the agreeableness of a beautiful face, full of vivacity, Madame de Pompadour possessed in perfection the art of creating for herself quite another

her with a great deal of grace. A confused murmur passed throughout the hall, with the remark: "The handkerchief is thrown!"—In the same book it is related, that the mother of the marchioness, Madame Poisson, was at that time affected with a mortal disease; but as soon as she learned that her daughter had nearly seduced the king, she began to breathe again, and believed herself cured. Her joy renewed her strength for some days, and she lived long enough to foresee the future glory of her daughter. She died while saying these words: "God be praised! I die content. I have nothing more to ask of Heaven!"

face, and this new creation was another result of her studies upon the relations between her soul and her physiognomy. Without altering her attitude, her visage was a perfect Proteus."—The gift of tears she only had, like other actresses, in the presence of the public. The public of Madame de Pompadour was Louis XV. God only knows the torment and anguish she must have suffered in playing her part for twenty-four years, without a moment's truce.

However, Monsieur d'Etoiles never witnessed his wife's return. He adored her, he lived for her; it appeared to him impossible to live without her. When he learned from his mother-in-law that his wife enjoyed the glory of living in the palace at Versailles, he fell into a profound grief; anger seized him at a later period; he wrote to his wife a letter full of true love; he besought her for the sake of their little daughter, for the sake of their past happiness, for the sake of virtue, to return to that house of which she was the joy and the hope.

Poor d'Etioles ended his letter thus:—

"Madame, think of it: you have a daughter that I love almost as much as yourself; but what am I to do? When the mother of a family dies, her children are objects of pity. You are not dead, yet my daughter is much more to be pitied!"

This truly-touching letter was written in the presence of the brother of Madame de Pompadour, who became afterward Marquis de Marigny. Well, the mistress of the king threw this noble and excellent letter into the fire without deigning to answer it. A second letter arrived a few days afterward. This time grief and love, were turned into jealousy and

rage. Madame d'Etioles knew that an answer was necessary. She answered it with banishment. Poor Monsieur d'Etioles received an order to betake himself immediately to Vaucluse. The country was well chosen. His grief was so deep, that he fell ill and did not recover for a whole year. All this occurred in France no longer than a hundred years ago.

Not only had the mistress of the king forgotten her husband, but she also forswore her name. Madame d'Etioles became the Marchioness de Pompadour. The house of Pompadour had just become extinct in the person of an Abbé de Pompadour, who read his breviary by the proxy of his valet, and thought himself quits with Heaven. There was no great distance between the Abbé de Pompadour and the Marchioness de Pompadour.

II.

THE THEATRE AT COURT.—VOLTAIRE.—JEAN-JACQUES.—THE FALL OF THE JESUITS.—PETITS-SOUPERS.—THE PARC-AUX-CERFS.

Madame de Pompadour soon perceived that a king like Louis XV., who had to interest him neither dreams of ambition, nor an elevated taste for the fine arts and literature, must have, if not, tales such as were told to the sultan of the Arabian Nights, at least a variety of *tableaux-vivants*. She commenced by making an actress of herself. The king was a spectator wearied with life; she knew that it was necessary to change her character often, and the spirit of that character, in order to succeed in amusing the

king. Twenty times a day she changed her dress, her enticements, her manners, passing from gayety to melancholy, accompanying a sally of wit with a tender expression; as sweet a songster as a siren, and as light as a bird, she contrived a thousand graceful child-like delights. Her beauty, the brilliancy of which was marvellous, was a great aid to her in all her changes of character. She dressed with exquisite art. Among the twenty different costumes that she was the first to conceive, the negligés a la Pompadour, are the most frequently alluded to; dresses in the form of a Turkish vest, which show with perfect grace all the lines of the female bust. She frequently passed a whole morning over her toilet, in company with Louis XV., who gave her advice in order to prolong this fairy occupation. Notwithstanding, the king got tired of having only one actress. In vain she disguised herself as a farmer's wife, as a peasant-girl, as a shepherdess, in order to take him by surprise, or rather to let herself be taken by surprise, in the turns of the park at Versailles.* The king at first found the play delightful, but by degrees he discovered that it was always the same woman under a thousand different disguises.

It would have been necessary for Madame de Pompadour, to have metamorphized herself entirely. Observing that the king was wearied with the comedy she herself had been acting for his benefit, she had a theatre built in the Cabinet of Medals, and chose the actors she thought worthy of playing with

* It is, moreover, well known that she disguises herself as a peasant-girl, milk-maid, nun, farmer's and gardener's wife, to surprise and entice the king.—*Abbe Soulavie.*

her in this theatre, which was to have for audience only the king and some well-beloved courtiers. The Duke de la Vallière was chosen manager; an abbé was selected for prompter. Here are the names of the actors: the Duke d'Orleans, the Duke d'Ayen, the Duke de Nivernais, the Duke de Duras, the Count de Maillebois, the Duke de Coigny, the Marquis d'Entraigues, the Duchess de Brancas, the Countess d'Estrade, Madame d'Angevilliers. I quote the following extract from the laws: "For admission as a member, proof must be given that it is not the first time that the applicant has acted, in order to prevent any inexperienced person from entering the company.—The actresses shall alone have the privilege of choosing the pieces to be played by the company.—The half-hour grace for the rehearsal shall only be allowed to the actresses, if they arrive later than this, they shall be fined, the fine to be fixed by themselves." The theatre opened with *Marriage Made and Broken*, by Dufresny. When we think of the marriage of Madame de Pompadour and D'Etioles, the play seems quite appropriate. At the beginning comedy was played, but finally nothing but operas and ballets. In the song and the dance, as in the play of the passions, Madame de Pompadour was the only actress of real talent. She was admirable in simple peasant-girls, especially in the part of Colette, in the *Devin de Village*. There was nothing so difficult as to get admission to this theatre of duchesses; the king alone disposed of the rights of admission: he proved himself more rigorous in regard to his theatre than his court; thus it was by no means a small favor for Vol-

taire, who for a long time had aspired to the joys of Versailles, to be allowed to see the *L'Enfant Prodigue* acted at the court theatre. Voltaire, like all men, had the weakness of wishing to govern the state; intoxicated with his literary success, he dreamed only of political honors. He hoped to become embassador or minister, through the favor of Madame de Pompadour; with a little more tact, he might have been made an embassador, a minister, or even a cardinal; but at the moment when he thought he had reached the aim of his desires, he made a false step in writing these famous lines :—

> Pompadour, thou the glory art,
> Of the court, poetry, and heart.

These lines, it is well known, gave rise to a remonstrance on the part of the queen and her daughters; all was lost for Voltaire in spite of the good will of Madame de Pompadour, who, moreover, seeing that the cause was a bad one, took good care not to compromise her favor, by any imprudent attempts in behalf of Voltaire. Voltaire never pardoned the marchioness for her lukewarmness; as vengeance is the delights of king and poets, Voltaire after innumerable madrigals and flatteries, wrote as follows, without the least reserve, in his famous poem :—

> And such, too, was that fortunate grisette,
> In whom both art and nature's gifts combine,
> Formed in the harem, on the stage to shine.
> Her royal bearing in her gait is shown,
> With majesty she arms her roguish eyes;
> Her voice assumes a more than regal tone,
> Above her rank her haughty spirit flies.

Notwithstanding, he always remained her friend; thus at the time when the marchioness was no longer beloved by the king, nor respected by his courtiers, Marmontel records the following conversation as having taken place at Ferney. "She is no longer loved, she is unhappy," said Marmontel. "Then," Voltaire exclaimed, "let her come here, and act tragedy with us; I will write parts for her, and the parts of a queen. She is beautiful; she must know the play of the passions."—"She also knows," replied Marmontel, "tears and profound grief."—"So much the better, that is just what we want."—"Since it suits you let it be so; if the theatre at Versailles is closed to her, I will tell her that yours is wide open to receive her."

Duclos and Rousseau were more severe toward her. Duclos believing himself to be a great historian, without temper or too much indulgence, judged her with severity. In his fear of being thought a courtier, he became unjust. Madame de Pompadour had attempted to attach Rousseau to her, but the proud republican of Geneva, wrote her a letter* which put an end to all negotiation. Notwithstanding, she always held him in high esteem. One day

* "MADAME: I thought for a moment that it was by mistake that your messenger offered to pay me five hundred francs for some copies of my book, which is sold at twelve francs. He however undeceived me, Allow me also, to undeceive you. With my savings I have succeeded in obtaining an annual income of five hundred and forty livres. My labor supplies me yearly with about the same amount; I have thus considerably more than I want; I do my best with it, although I hardly give any in charity. If, contrary to present appearances, old age or disease should at any day deprive me of my strength, I have a friend.

"J. J. ROUSSEAU.

"Paris, *Aug.* 18, 1762."

when the wife of the Maréchal de Mirepoix advised her not to trouble herself about that owl, she replied, "He is indeed an owl, but an owl of Minerva."

Madame de Pompadour, who wished to strengthen her regal position, determined to be queen of France, as Louis XV. was king of France, *by the grace of God*. The Prince de Soubise, who was one of her courtiers, took upon himself to procure for her a Jesuit of favorable disposition who would consent to confess her and to absolve her from all her sins committed at court. Father de Sacy, had in good company, preserved the manners of a frank gentleman. He knew how to be of his age, and laughed somewhat at the severities of his order. The Prince de Soubise went to him. He was at first somewhat reserved: "Reflect that there is but a step from the confessional of the marchioness to the confessional of the king." De Sacy could not resist the attraction of this dangerous position. He went to see the marchioness. She received him in the most amiable manner in the world; she was proud to have as her confessor, a man who was just appointed procureur-general of the missions. Until then, the party of the Jesuits at the court had opposed her; the queen, the dauphin, Father Griffet, the Cardinal de Luynes, the Bishop of Verdun, Monsieur de Nicolai; all had hoped to drive her from the throne as a profane wretch. Well, once declared worthy of the protection of God, by a Jesuit, so distinguished as De Sacy, did she not become almost inviolable, and somewhat sacred? She put into play all her seductions against her confessor. She never brought to bear more grace, skill, and beauty. The king would have been justified in becoming jealous.

Father de Sacy, who allowed himself to be captivated by the charming coquetry of a woman who was more haughty than a real queen, went seven or eight times to speak to her about confession, without desiring to confess her as yet. Was it not rather the prelude to a profane love, than a prelude to divine love? As the good city of Paris did not know how else to amuse itself at that time, it amused itself with this confession. Songs were composed about the confessor and his penitent. Piron entered one evening the café Procope, saying that he had some news from Versailles: "Well, has the marchioness been to confessional?" — "No; Madame de Pompadour could not come to an understanding with Father de Sacy about the kind of confessional." The next morning, there was great excitement among the Jesuits; they summoned before their council of Ten, the procureur-general of missions. He was obliged himself to confess. He was ordered, as a penance for his absolution, to refuse his counsels to the marchioness, "and to excuse himself the best way he could, for having so long a time amused her."

Father de Sacy presented himself before Madame de Pompadour for the last time. Here is word for word what he said: "The absolution, madame, that you desire can not be granted to you; your residence at court, apart from your husband; the public rumors, relative to the favors granted you by the king, prevent you from approaching the holy table. The priest instead of absolving you, would only pronounce a double damnation, yours and his own; while the public, accustomed to judge the conduct of great people with severity, would confirm it without ap-

peal. You desire, madame, you have thus told me, to perform the duties of a good Christian; but the first duty of a Christian, is good example; and in order to obtain absolution, and to deserve it, the preliminary step, must be to reunite yourself to Monsieur d'Etioles, or at least to abandon the court, and to edify your neighbors, by a better example, who declare themselves scandalized by your separation from your husband."

Madame de Pompadour listened to these words with the calmness of a statue. But as soon as Father de Sacy had finished the last word, she burst forth imperiously:—

"Father, you are a fool, a rogue, a real Jesuit; do you understand? You have played with the embarrassment in which you supposed I was involved. You wish, I know very well, you and the rest of you, to see me removed from the king; but I am as powerful, as you think me weak and failing; and in spite of all the Jesuits in the world, I will remain at court, while they themselves shall not only be driven from the court, but the kingdom also."

From that day the fall of the Jesuits was decided. The holy fathers thought that the marchioness was like Madame de Châteauroux, only a queen for a day. To do them justice, they thought they had nothing to fear from such an enemy. Certainly, if they had foreseen the power of this woman, who had all the firm resolve of a man, or rather of a woman who revenges herself, they would have allowed her to approach the holy table, and if it had been necessary, they would have reserved a place for her among the queens of heaven.

Madame de Pompadour was born with some noble instincts; the most severe of her libellers have never denied her taste for the fine arts. She desired to make of Louis XV. an artist king; she always tried to draw him out of his apathy by noble interests. But Louis XV. did not understand, like Louis XIV., how great monuments often make the glory of kings. Will it not be interesting to recall here the ideas that the Marchioness de Pompadour had for the embellishment of Paris? She wished to make a single convent, out of all the Benedictine convents, to convert the gardens of those vast solitudes into public places, shaded with trees, spread with grass, and adorned with statues. The Archbishop of Paris gave Louis XV. to understand, who, in spite of all, was always religious, that in order to secure a good place in heaven, he must not disturb the quarters of the Benedictines here below. Madame de Pompadour wished to adorn the galleries of the Louvre, and to place there paintings of all the different schools. Louis XV., who was avaricious, was afraid of being compelled, in order to carry out such a regal enterprise, to have recourse to his private property; besides, some artists, who were then celebrated, opposed it with all their might, under the pretext that there would be no money left to purchase their pictures. Madame de Pompadour entertained the idea of rebuilding the *cité;* the plan of this project which was presented to the king, had been traced under the eyes of the marchioness. The design was to build magnificent houses, and ornament the first stories with balconies, which would serve to cover the footpath; but, as in order to have carried out

this plan, it would have been necessary to have suppressed sixteen of the churches of the *cité*, the king, in consequence of the opposition of the chapter of Nôtre Dame and the clergy, did not give his assent, and the *cité* remained as now, with its hiding-places for robbers and prostitutes. Madame de Pompadour proposed the erection of another Hotel-Dieu, representing to the king, that it was a melancholy thing in a kingdom like that of France, to see two sick persons in one bed. But Madame de Pompadour was at that time the only advocate for the poor in Versailles. To this prayer, the king answered: "Have we not a hunting-box at Choisy? I have consented to build Bellevue for our pleasures, and I have rebuilt St. Sulpice for the love of God." The King Louis XV. only believed in himself, his mistress, and God. Madame de Pompadour was, however, successful in her project for a military school. It was by the force of constantly repeating to the king that he must distinguish his reign by a monument. Madame de Pompadour succeeded also in founding the manufactory at Sèvres.* Finally, Madame de Pompadour suggested the idea of rebuilding the *Madeleine*, which was the only church where she liked to worship God.

The little suppers of Versailles succeeded sometimes in cheering Louis XV., who carried his ennui with him everywhere, to the hunt, to the theatre, to the gardens of the palace. After supper, he occa-

* French porcelain, a century ago, was only a coarse counterfeit of the Japan porcelain. In France, 500,000 livres were annually paid for German and Chinese porcelain. A short time after the establishment of the manufacture at Sèvres, foreigners bought annually in France a million's worth of porcelain.

sionally indulged in some sallies of wit, that were by turns delicate and gross. One evening, after some one had sung a plaintive song about the misfortunes of Adam, our first parent, the king improvised a couplet worthy of the best songs of Collé :—

TO ADAM.

"One wife thou hadst with thee,
But that one she was thine;
Here many wives I see,
But see not her that's mine."

You see Louis XV. had also his days of poetry. Anacreon could not have done better.

By-the-by, what was the queen doing during these little suppers, these joyous theatrical amusements, these everlasting festivals of gallantry? The queen was praying God, and believing that God always protected France. Madame de Pompadour, it is well known, was one of her ladies of honor; but the lady of honor and the queen were never in the habit of seeing each other. One day, while the king was walking in the park of Versailles with his mistress, and as they had nothing else to talk about, they passed a most glowing eulogium upon the virtues of the excellent Marie Leczinska. "Hold, marchioness," said Louis XV., "carry to her, in my behalf, these flowers that you have plucked for me." Madame de Pompadour did not wait to be urged; it was the first time she had ever done anything for the queen. After having bowed and presented the bouquet, she was about retiring; but the queen asked her to stay, and besought her to sing for her,

adding that she had heard wonders of her voice. The marchioness felt offended, and excused herself, by saying that she could not yield to such a request. The queen no longer requested, she commanded. Madame de Pompadour immediately commenced singing the famous monologue in *Armida: At last I have him in my power!*

Madame de Pompadour, born in the ranks of the people, and seating herself at her ease upon the throne of Blanche of Castile; Madame de Pompadour, protecting philosophers and banishing the Jesuits, treating great noblemen with the same freedom as artists, was one of the thousand causes of the French revolution. Madame Dubarry only imitated her predecessor, when she called a noble duke an ape. The saying is well known: "Announce *Madame Dubarry's ape*." Thus spoke a great lord belonging to the court of Louis XV. It would be curious to enrich the great book of heraldry with all the nicknames given as titles of nobility by the mistresses of Louis XV. to the courtiers of Versailles. More than one fine name that France boasted of with pride lost its brilliancy in that atmosphere of courtiers and courtesans. "Not only," said Madame de Pompadour, to the Abbé de Bernis, "have I all the nobility at my feet, but my little dog even is wearied with homage." Madame de Pompadour reigned so imperiously, that one day at Versailles, at the end of dinner, an old man approached the king, and besought him quite aloud to have the goodness to recommend him to Madame de Pompadour. Every one smiled but the marchioness.

But the poniard of Damiens was nearly her ruin; the king, frightened on account of his disorderly life, during the few hours that he thought himself on the bed of death, was about renouncing the marchioness, the pomps, and the vanities of the world. She succeeded in blinding the king, and resumed her empire. She made known to him, whence came the blow of the poniard. Damiens was armed by the Jesuits, but the weapon was forged by the English. The English were fearful of an alliance between France and Austria; they wished to ruin France, which had given them greater offence than ever; they were in dread of being ruined by her. They encouraged the fierce quarrel between the Jansenists and Molinists, between the clergy and parliament, between the party of Madame de Pompadour — the friend of Maria-Theresa and the philosophers — and the party of the Dauphin — the enemy of Maria-Theresa and the philosophers — a superstitious prince without cultivation or strength of mind. The English undertook, when the battle should rage, and the minds of the people should be excited, to find an assassin's arm among the Jesuits with which to strike Louis XV., for with the dauphin once on the throne, the Jesuits and the English would resume all their power. This, at least, was Madame de Pompadour's version, which the historian has not been able to dispute.

Madame de Maintenon had less difficulty in amusing Louis XIV., old and superstitiously religious, than Madame de Pompadour had in interesting Louis XV., who was still young, but wearied with all kinds of joys, even those of a future paradise.

At the time when the marchioness used to disguise herself as a peasant-girl, or a gardener's wife, she had built a very romantic hermitage in the park of Versailles, on the borders of a forest on the road to St. Germain; observed from the exterior, it was a retreat, fitted in every respect for an anchorite; but as soon as the threshold was crossed, it was a little mansion worthy of an old roué of the Regency. Vanloo, Boucher, De la Tour, had been there to reproduce upon the walls and ceilings all the charming images of pagan art. There was an unheard-of luxury of naiads and hamadryades. Venus, Hebe, Diana the huntress, the three Graces, with their hair only for costume, abounded there innumerable. The garden was a masterpiece of seductive attractiveness; it was rather a wood than a garden, a wood peopled with statues, formed of verdant and odorous arcades, of charming groves, of dark, shaded retreats. In the middle of the garden, there was a farm, a real farm in all its details, with cows, goats, and sheep. The marchioness presided daily over the building of this hermitage. "Where are you going?" said Louis XV. to her, seeing her go out so often.—"Sire, I am building a hermitage for my old age. . . You know that I am somewhat devotional; I shall end my life in solitude."—"Yes, like all those who have loved greatly, or rather who have been greatly loved."

Toward the end of spring, when the woods had become green, and the trees were in blossom, when the enamelled grass carpeted the paths, Madame de Pompadour begged Louis XV. to come and breakfast at her hermitage.

The king went in the company of a single valet-de-

chambre. Surprise followed upon surprise. At first, before entering, at the sight of a roof covered with thatch, he thought he was going to breakfast like an anchorite; he seriously feared that the marchioness had taken a fancy for retirement. He entered the court-yard: he went straight to the door of the hermitage. At that moment, a young peasant-girl came out to meet him; as she was fresh-looking, delicate, and pretty, he began to find the hermitage to his taste. She begged him to follow her to the farm, passing through the odoriferous groves. Did Louis XV. not think of stopping on the way with her who was his guide?

When he approached the farm, another peasant-girl, more delicate still, came out of a stable, and, making a thousand courtesies, presented him with a basin of fresh milk. At the sight of this charming milkmaid, wearing a little cap, coquettishly arranged upon her back hair, and dressed in a white boddice and blue petticoat, the king blushed with delight. Before taking the milk-basin in his hands, he looked at her a second time from head to foot. She cast down her eyes timidly, with that air of innocence that gives such a charm to young girls of fifteen. Her arms were of the brightness of the lily. She had upon her neck a little golden cross, which had fallen and lost itself in a superb bouquet of roses, which seemed to bloom from her bosom. But that which especially astonished the king was a pair of pretty bare feet, worthy of marble and the sculptor, in a pair of the most rustic-looking wooden shoes.

By a coquetry that was almost artless, the pretty milkmaid placed one of her feet upon the outside

of one of the wooden shoes. The king recognised the marchioness, and confessed to her that for the first time in his life he had felt the desire to kiss a pretty foot. Madame de Pompadour returned with her lover to the hermitage, and this was the origin of the famous Parc-aux-Cerfs.

When Madame de Pompadour had exhausted all her metamorphoses, she peopled the Parc-aux-Cerfs with milkmaids, with shepherdesses, with abbesses, who continued the part played by herself with so much genius and grace. She wished to reign not over the heart of Louis XV., but over France; while Louis XV. was reigning in the Parc-aux-Cerfs, she was governing at Versailles.

III.

POLICY OF THE KING AND HIS MISTRESS.—MADAME DE CHOISEUL.—THE PHILOSOPHERS AT VERSAILLES.—THE SYBIL.—MARECHAL RICHELIEU.—PRESENTIMENT OF DEATH.

It would be difficult to study the political system of Madame de Pompadour, if, indeed, she had any system at all. It can not be denied that she had some fixed opinions, but, most generally, they were mere caprices. However, the Duke de Choiseul, who held the offices of three ministers, who disposed of all the power of government, followed to the letter the policy of Madame de Pompadour, in overturning the system of Louis XIV., in forming an alliance with Austria, in forming a league, or rather a family compact, with Italy and Spain. The policy of Madame

de Pompadour united Corsica to France: thus Bonaparte, who was born after the death of the marchioness, owed to her his title of a French citizen.

Women never live for the future: their reign is from day to day, for it is the power of beauty only which diminishes as it advances. The women of genius who have attempted to govern the world have never contemplated the clouds of a distant horizon; they have been able to look about them, but never at a distance from themselves. *After me the deluge!* was the saying of Madame de Pompadour.

The eighteenth century was a century of striking contrasts: the first minister who succeeded Cardinal de Fleury was Madame de Pompadour. Under the cardinal, a blind superstition protected the throne against parliament; under the marchioness, we see philosophy arising, which is destined to worry, in their turn, both the clergy and parliament. Under Madame de Pompadour, the king, if he had been as bold as she was, would have been more of a king than ever. The cardinal was miserly as administrator; the marchioness showed herself as prodigal as a mistress, saying that money ought to flow from the throne in a full current, in a generous stream, that should overflow the whole state. The cardinal had been hostile to Austria and favorable to Prussia; the marchioness made war against Frederick, in order to please Maria-Theresa. The battle of Rosbach was a failure, but, as she herself asked, had she the power of making heroes?

Is it right for the historian to blame this woman for all the disgrace of the reign of Louis XV.? She reached the throne at the moment when royalty

by the grace of God was disappearing before the sovereignty of public opinion. There was nothing to be done at Versailles, for in Paris the power was already in the hands of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques, and Diderot. Madame de Pompadour had so just an opinion of the power of this sovereignty, that she anticipated it. Did she not protect to her utmost the philosophers, those even who were destined to overthrow the throne upon which she was seated? The artists who have painted her have never forgotten to represent in her pictures such revolutionary books as the *Encyclopœdia*, the *Philosophical Dictionary*, the *Spirit of the Laws*, and the *Social Contract.*

Madame de Pompadour loved revenge; this was her great fault. For a single word she imprisoned Latude in the Bastile; for a sonnet, she exiled Maurepas. Frederic called her influence the petticoat reign; the seven years' war was the consequence.

Louis XV., always religious, at least after supper, trusting the destinies of France to Providence, used to say, that God alone had hands sufficiently strong to hold the reins of government. He, therefore, looked with pity upon the profound deliberations of his ministers. He said one day to the Maréchal de Richelieu, then one of his four gentlemen in waiting: "You see all these councils assembled to weigh the different opinions; you will find that they will choose the worst." —He hardly took the trouble to dispute any of the opinions of his council. "What matters it?" he used to say to Madame de Pompadour, "little storms will be sure to be raised from all they do, but shall we not be under cover?"—From all these storms, badly dis-

persed, there arose a tempest which overturned the throne.

In order to preserve her empire, Madame de Pompadour condescended to all kinds of meanness and humiliation. She banished the Jesuits in order to make friends with some members of the parliament; she banished the parliament to make friends with the clergy. In order to prevent her royal lover from taking another acknowledged mistress from the ladies of the court, she invented that harem without brilliancy or romance which was called the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, "the pillow of Louis XV.'s debauchery," as Chateaubriand called it. Finally, hated and despised by all France, Madame de Pompadour said to Louis XV.: "Keep me by you, I pray: it is I who protect you! I assume upon my head all the hatred of the whole of France: the times are bad for kings; as soon as I am gone, all the insults which are cast upon the Marchioness de Pompadour will be heaped upon the king!"

Among the bold attempts hazarded to overthrow Madame de Pompadour, the following is one of the most curious:—

Monsieur d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrade had resolved upon raising to the throne the young and beautiful Madame de Choiseul the wife of the *menin*. The intrigue was managed with so much skill, that the king granted her an interview. There was great excitement in the ministerial cabinet during the hour of the rendezvous. Monsieur d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrade waited the result with anxiety. Quesnai, the physician to the king, and a favorite of his, was present. All of a sudden, Madame de Choiseul

rushed in, with her hair all dishevelled, and in a charming state of disorder. Madame d'Estrade ran to meet her with open arms.—"Well, then?"—"Yes, I am loved! she is to be dismissed; he has given me his word for it!"—A burst of delight resounded through the cabinet. Quesnai, it is known, was the friend of Madame de Pompadour; but he was also a friend of Madame d'Estrade. Monsieur d'Argenson thought that he would at least remain neutral in this revolution.—"Doctor," said he, "there will be no change for you; we hope you will remain with us."—"I, sir," answered Quesnai, coolly, as he rose, "I was attached to Madame de Pompadour in her prosperity; I will remain so in her adversity."—He immediately departed.

This man of rustic manners, a true peasant of the Danube, who found himself in such singular company at Versailles, inhabited the second story above the apartments of Madame de Pompadour. He passed all his time in musing on political economy. He had for his friends all the most distinguished philosophers. Those who did not go to court, went to dine merrily, once a month, with Quesnai. Marmontel informs us, that he dined with him, in company with Diderot, D'Alembert, Duclos, Helvetius, Turgot, Buffon. Thus below, on the ground-floor, they discussed peace and war, the choice of ministers, the banishment of the Jesuits, the exile of the parliament, the destinies of France. While above, those who had not the power, but who had the ideas, were working out, without knowing it, the destinies of the world. They pulled down in the second story, what was erected on the ground-floor. It sometimes occurred, that Madame de Pompadour, unable to re-

ceive the guests of Quesnai on the ground-floor, ascended, in order to visit and converse with them while at Quesnai's table.*

About this period, there was a celebrated sorceress, by the name of Bontemps. Madame de Pompadour was astonished by some of her predictions. Two of her ministers, the Abbé de Bernis, and the Duke de Choiseul, had perfect faith in her; she had foretold to both of them in their youth, that they would reach the highest dignities. Madame de Pompadour wished, at all hazards, to have her fortune told by Bontemps. In order to deceive the sorceress, she managed to have her sent for to the house of the niece of Monsieur de Gontaud's valet, who was in her confidence; the Duke de Gontaud who attended her, secreted himself in a closet; her *femme-de-chambre*, Madame du Hausset, remained with her, by the fireside.

Bontemps soon arrived; she found Madame de Pompadour seated upon a high-backed chair, with a night-cap on her head, and dressed like a common woman. In accordance with the orders of the sorceress, a coffeepot and some coffeecups were prepared. She heated the coffee, took hold of the hands of the marchioness, in order to read their lines, drew from her pocket a mirror, and said: "Let us see what kind of a face you show there." After a thousand ceremonies, looking at the shapes formed by the coffee-grounds, she spoke as follows: "Neither beautiful nor ugly, but I see a calm sky, and besides,

* Quesnai was very gracefully ennobled by Louis XV. It was in Madame de Pompadour's chamber; the king took three pansies out of a vase of Sèvres china: "Here, Quesnai, I confer nobility upon you, and give you an expressive coat-of-arms.

all those things which seem to rise, those lines that are elevated, they are applauses; there are some golden clouds which surround you; you see that vessel at sea, mark what a favorable wind it has! You are on deck, and reach a magnificent country of which you become the queen . . . . Hold! look, there is a kind of a giant. Gold, silver, there are some clouds here and there . . . . But you have nothing to fear . . . . The vessel will be sometimes tossed about, but will never perish." The sorceress was silent, Madame de Pompadour, all in a tremor, asked her if she should soon die, and of what disease. "I never say anything about such matters," answered Bontemps.—"Well, as you please as to the time," replied the marchioness, "but the kind of death?"—"You will have time to find that out yourself." The sorceress was paid, and she left immediately after. "Well?" said Madame de Pompadour to the Duke de Gontaud, who had heard all. "It is astonishing," said he, "but it is like the clouds; you can read in them what you please."

Maréchal de Richelieu was one of the most faithful of the marchioness's friends. I have before me a curious letter, sealed in red wax, with the arms of Aragon; it is written on paper that a lacquey would disdain, at the present day, to make use of to confide his flame to a chambermaid, a singular contrast to the imperial style of the letter addressed by Madame de Pompadour to the Maréchal de Richelieu: "I wish I could write you good news about the state of my nerves, but they are worse than ever. I again passed the whole night sitting up, in order to prevent myself from suffocating; I believe that when the

public misfortunes shall have passed away (which I feel so deeply), there will be no cure for these dreadful nerves of mine, they are in such a state.

"Good-by, maréchal, your wishes for my happiness can only be accomplished by the tranquillity of France; I know that you think of me occasionally in your way, and you will find in the long run, that you have not another friend like me."

The date of this letter is 1751. The fragment of the one that follows, will give an idea of the manner of the Maréchal de Richelieu in writing to Madame de Pompadour. "Madame, it is certainly more agreeable to see you than to write to you, but it may be, perhaps, more useful to write than to see you, when reflection and meditation are impossible. I take the liberty of sending you a work on the coasts of France, that my attachment to the king and my zeal for the state have induced me to prepare. Should you hiss me as you would a bad play, I would console myself with the reflection, that I had done my duty. How would it be possible to behold without emotion, the English in the centre of the kingdom? It is true, madame, that Louis XIII. placed his kingdom under the protection of the Holy Virgin; but it is also true that our ministers expect too much from *her* and from *you*, and you know that the king expects too much from his ministers. Adieu, madame, I am very impatient to pay my court to you."*

* Notwithstanding, the Maréchal de Richelieu, while he was one of the most assiduous of the marchioness's courtiers, refused her his son when she asked him for her daughter Alexandrine d' Etioles, who died, soon after this refusal, in a convent. Thus, Madame de Pompadour, received in the same year, two severe wounds of the heart; the outrageous refusal of the maréchal and the death of her daughter, whom she believed intended for a high destiny.

Here is another fragment of a letter of Madame de Pompadour, which is characteristic. She is writing to the Countess de Brézé. "If you go to Val de Grace, I beg you to give my compliments to Madame de Senneterre. Alas! she has chosen the best part; the world does not deserve the heart which God has given her. Her youth and her charms, at first attracted a crowd of worshippers; now she has turned saint, and the devil is duped."

Farther on, she writes as follows: "The ancient Germans used to say, that there was something of divinity in a beautiful woman. I am almost of their opinion, and I think that the greatness of God is more visible in a beautiful face than in the genius of Newton."

A little farther on again, she is complaining of the ennui of the court: "It is no more possible for me to be gay here, than it is for Madame de Percival to be pretty."

Madame de Pompadour had not seen her husband for fifteen years; one day, at the opera, she thought she recognised him in the person of a farmer-general, blooming like a farmer-general. An income of four hundred thousand livres had consoled D'Etioles. A good many console themselves with less.

On that day the chief performance was in the body of the theatre, not on the stage. The marchioness had to endure all the witticisms, jokes, and satires, that were levelled by the pit at Monsieur d'Etioles; the next day there was an extraordinary session in the king's cabinet. It was determined that the farmer-general should for the future be ordered

to remain at his hotel, when the marchioness went to Paris.

Madame de Pompadour was in the habit of receiving on Sundays, while at her toilet, artists, men of letters, and the distinguished nobles whom she allowed to pay court to her. Marmontel relates that, on the arrival of Duclos and Bernis, who were never absent a single Sunday, she used to say to one, "with a careless air, and low voice, '*Good day*, Duclos; to the other, with a more friendly air and cordial expression, '*Good day*, abbé,' giving him sometimes, at the same time, a gentle tap upon the cheek." She almost always received artists with more cordiality than she did her noble and titled courtiers. J. B. Vanloo, De la Tour, Boucher, Carle Vanloo, Cochin, were never kept waiting in the lobby. Her first interview with Crébillon is well known. She had been told that the old poet was living, poor and forsaken, in the most obscure part of the Marais, with his dogs and his cats. "What do you say? poor and forsaken!" She ran in search of the king, and asked, upon her privy-purse account, for a pension for him of a hundred louis. When Crébillon went to Versailles to thank her, she was in bed: "Let him enter, that I may see genius in gray hairs." She was affected to tears at the sight of that fine-looking old man, poor yet proud. She received him with a touching grace; he himself was affected by it; and when he was bending over the bed to kiss her hand, the king made his appearance. "Ah, madame!" exclaimed Crébillon, "the king has caught us; I am ruined." This sally pleased the

king; the success of Crébillon was decided. It is necessary to state that he was eighty years old.

Madame de Pompadour spent her last days in deep despondency. Since she had reached the decline of her favor and her reign, she had no more friends; the king himself still submitted to her influence, but did not love her any longer. The Jesuits that she had driven away, the Jesuits who never disappear, overwhelmed her with letters, in which they described for her benefit the terrors of the damned. She did not believe in hell; but was she not already suffering its torments? Each hour that passed sunk her deeper in grief. On her first appearance at court, proud of her youth, her beauty, and her bloom, she had proscribed rouge and patches, saying that life was not a masked ball. She had now arrived at that sad and desolate time of life, when a choice must be made between *rouge* and the first wrinkles. "I shall never survive it," she said with alarm.

One night, in the year 1760, she rose up in her bed, called Madame du Hausset, and said to her tremblingly, "I am going to die, I feel it; Madame de Vintimille, and Madame de Chateauroux, both died *young like me;* it is a fatality that strikes all who have loved the king. But that which I regret the least, is life; I am wearied with homage, with insult, with friendships, and with hates; but I will confess to you, that I am frightened at the idea of being cast into a sewer, either by the clergy, or by the dauphin, or by the people of Paris." Madame du Hausset grasped her hand, and said to her, that if France should have the misfortune to lose her, the king would give her a burial worthy of her. "Alas!"

replied Madame de Pompadour, "a decent burial, when Madame de Mailly, repentant for having been his first mistress, wished to be interred in the cemetery of the Innocents, even in the drain."

She passed the whole night sobbing. When morning broke, she recovered her courage a little; she availed herself of all the resources of art, in order to conceal the first ravages of age; but vain was her attempt to bring back that adorable smile with which twenty years before she had made Louis XV. forget that he was king of France.

IV.

THE DEATH OF MADAME DE POMPADOUR.—HER WILL.—FUNERAL ORATION.—TWO PORTRAITS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

She did not wish to make her appearance again in Paris; at court, she only showed herself by candlelight, in the array of a queen of Golconda, crowned with diamonds, wearing twenty bracelets, and trailing after her an Indian robe embroidered with gold and silver. She was always the divine marchioness of the past; but on looking at her near by, it would be soon found out that it was only a pastel, still charming, but faded here and there, and retouched with paint. It was in her mouth that she first began to lose her beauty. She had early acquired the habit of biting her lips, in order to conceal her emotion. At thirty years, her mouth had lost all its striking brilliancy.

It has been said, that she died of poison, adminis

tered either by the Jesuits who overwhelmed her with anonymous letters, or by her enemies at Versailles. Madame de Pompadour, all sensible people think so, died because she had reached the age of forty-four, because she owed her power to her beauty alone, and because she did not wish to survive her beauty. She suffered a long time in silence, concealing always, beneath a pale smile, death, the approach of which she already felt; at last, she betook herself to her bed, never to rise again. She was at her chateau of Choisy; the king and his courtiers did not believe that her disease was serious, but she did not blind herself. She begged the king to conduct her to Versailles; she wished to die upon the theatre of her glory, to die like a queen in a royal palace, giving her commands to the last, and beholding at her feet a crowd of courtiers.

She died in April (15th April, 1764), like Diana of Poitiers, Gabrielle d'Estrées, and Madame de Maintenon. The curé of Madeleine attended her in her last moments. When he bowed after having given her the blessing, she said to him, rousing herself, for she was nearly dead: "*Wait, my dear curé, we will depart together.*" * The king had, till then, exhibited toward her a friendship based on remembrance and gratitude; but as soon as she had breathed her last sigh, he only troubled himself about the means of getting rid of her mortal remains. He ordered her to be taken to her hotel in Paris.

* No one in those days ever thought of going to the next world, without a jest at parting. "What the deuce have you been singing, curé? you are out of tune," said Rameau to the curé of St. Eustache, who had been speaking to him of the eternal harmonies of Paradise.

When the carriage, which was bearing away the body of the dead, had started, the king, sitting at one of the windows of the palace, and observing a shower that was pouring down in torrents upon Versailles, said, with a smile, both sadly and jokingly, "The marchioness will have bad weather for her journey."

On the same day the will of Madame de Pompadour was opened in his presence. Though she had long since been a stranger to his heart, he could not prevent a tear or so from falling during the reading of her will.

"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, Marchioness de Pompadour, the separated wife of Charles William Lenormant d'Etioles,* squire, have made and signed this my will.

"I recommend my soul to God, hoping to propitiate his justice, through the merits of the precious blood of Jesus Christ, my Savior, and by the powerful intercession of the Holy Virgin, and of all the saints of Paradise. I desire that my body may be carried to the monastery of the capuchins, in the Place Vendôme, without ceremony, and that it be buried in the tomb of the chapel that has been granted to me in their church."

In her will the marchioness forgot none of her friends and servants; the king himself was remembered in it. "I beg the king to accept as a legacy, my hotel in Paris, that it may become a palace for

* She only mentioned her husband in her will, in order to say that she was separated from him.

one of his grandchildren; I desire that this may be the Count of Provence." This hotel of Madame de Pompadour, has been inhabited by illustrious hosts, for it is the Elysée Bourbon of the present day.

To this will a codicil was annexed, which proves that Madame de Pompadour had preserved some friends. "I desire to leave as marks of friendship, to Madame du Roure, the portrait of my daughter in a frame mounted with diamonds. To Madame de Mirepoix, my watch mounted with diamonds. To Madame de Chateau-Renaud, my portrait of the king mounted with diamonds. To the Duchess de Choiseul, my silver box, mounted with diamonds. To the Duchess de Grammont, my other box ornamented with a butterfly in diamonds. To the Duke de Gontaud, my *alliance*, of white and rose-colored brilliants, joined with a green tie, and my cornelian box that he has always so much admired. To the Duke de Choiseul, my aqua-marine colored diamond, and my ebony inlaid box with facets of diamonds. To the Maréchal de Soubise, my ring made by Gay, representing friendship; it is my portrait and his, for the twenty years I have known him. To Madame de Vamblemont, my set of emerald ornaments."

The will is dated, March 30th, 1761, the codicil was written at the hour of Madame de Pompadour's death, April 15th. She had hardly strength to sign it.

Madame de Pompadour had received from the king a hotel at Paris, and one at Fontainebleau, the estate of Crecy, the chateau of Aulnay, Brimborion on Bellevue, the manors of Marigny and St. Remy, a hotel at Compèigne, and one at Versailles — without

counting the millions of money, for they never kept account at Versailles.* This did not prevent Louis XV. from giving to the Marquis of Marigny, two hundred and thirty thousand francs, to *aid him toward paying the debts* of the marchioness. (Journal of Louis XV. published at the trial of Louis XVI.)

The hotel of Madame de Pompadour, was a rich and complete gallery of art: paintings, statues, old engravings, bronzes, library, richly-wrought plate, all the pomp of art and of luxurious caprice, enriched this celebrated hotel. The Marquis de Marigny offered all this magnificent collection for sale, a few days after the death of his sister. The sale lasted a whole year.

A newspaper of the day, thus records the death of Madame de Pompadour:—

"April 15, 1754. The marchioness died in the evening of this date. The brilliant patronage with which she honored literature, her taste for the arts, her generosity to artists, will not allow us to pass over in silence so sad an event. This female philosopher beheld the approach of death, with the firmness of a heroine."

While she was in power, she had inspired numberless lampoons in verse, which caused an English author to say: "France was a monarchy limited by verse." Once dead, the lampoonists revived their wit; more than fifty epitaphs were circulated in Paris and Versailles. A caricaturist of the day represented her tomb surmounted by her bust: on the right, Hymen mourned; on the left, Love wept. The

* With the exception of Louis XV., who was pleased to have a private treasury of his own. When he lost at play, he paid his losses out of the royal treasury.

torches of Hymen and Love were both on the ground; below the bust, were written these six famous lines:—

Here lies Pompadour, D'Etiole,
Loved by all, of the court the soul.
A perfect mistress, faithless wife,
Hymen and Love have reason sore—
The first in grief to mourn her life,
Her death, the latter to deplore.

The marchioness was buried in a vault of the church of the capuchins; her family had succeeded, by means of their money, in having a funeral oration delivered over her mortal remains. This funeral oration was a masterpiece, that ought to have been preserved for the glory of the church; unfortunately, this curious specimen of religious literature was never printed. Here is all of it that history has recorded in her annals. When the priest approached the marchioness's coffin, he sprinkled the holy water, made the sign of the cross, and commenced his discourse, as follows: "I now receive the body of that most high and mighty lady, the Marchioness de Pompadour, one of the dames of honor to the queen. She was in the school of all the virtues . . ." The rest of this ingenious stroke of gallantry is not known.

The Marquis de Marigny met at the door of the church Monsieur d'Etioles, who had been with his mistress to listen to that very edifying funeral oration. This mistress was a dancing-girl of the opera, Mademoiselle Rems, who had perfectly consoled the farmer-general for the infidelity of his wife. The Marquis de Marigny had never lost sight of his brother-in-law, whom he constantly met at the opera; he

went to him and spoke to him, just as he was getting into his carriage, "Well, D'Etioles, are you going to make your claim as heir?"

The farmer-general had become a philosopher (who was not in France, in 1764?). He answered with this well-known line:—

"I wish not that which cost so many tears."

There was another funeral oration. A painter, a member of the Academy, Drouais, exhibited in one of the apartments of the palace of the Tuileries, a beautiful portrait of the marchioness, a worthy memento of her grace and genius. Madame de Pompadour was represented at full length, engaged in her usual occupation in her cabinet at Versailles. On one side, there was a large drapery formed by curtains, on the other, all the implements of painting and music. A little spaniel was gazing at its mistress, who had ceased from her work in order to meditate. The painting was rather remarkable for delicacy than force; the coloring was more soft and brilliant than true. It was, however, an excellent portrait, because the painter had given with marvellous effect the charming expression of the marchioness. The drapery was painted with the touch of a master. This portrait royally displayed in an apartment of the Tuileries, this portrait, which had been well placed in the little apartment at Versailles, to throw a romance about the remembrance of Louis XV.— will it be believed?—was sold, by the order of the king, to the first customer who offered a thousand crowns for the marchioness. Louis XV. lived,

from day to day, without a hope, without a remembrance.

Carle Vanloo, who was the artist who had been the most patronised by the marchioness, painted his last painting for her. She was dying; he also was dying. It was an allegorical picture, representing the Arts in supplication. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Poetry, and Music, all the Arts, were represented kneeling, with their arms raised toward Destiny and the Fates. Destiny was supported by the World, having on his left the book of Fate, and, on his right, the urn, whence he was drawing the lot of mankind. One of the Fates held a distaff, another was spinning, the third was about cutting the thread of the life of Madame de Pompadour; but Destiny was arresting her hand. It was, perhaps, Carle Vanloo's best painting. Diderot, who criticised with severity the works of his friend, was enthusiastic about this picture. "Fine attitudes, great character, full of passion, fine coloring. Painting should be distinguished from the other arts: accordingly the most violent alarm is depicted upon her face; she is springing forward, she has her mouth open, she is crying aloud." A whole page of enthusiasm follows this beginning. Diderot thus concludes: "The suppliants of Vanloo obtained nothing from Destiny more favorable to France than to the arts. Madame de Pompadour is dead. Well! what remains of that woman who exhausted our men and squandered our wealth, left us without energy or honor, and who overturned the political system of Europe? The treaty of Versailles which may last as long as it can; Love by Bouchardon that will be al-

ways admired; a few impressions on stone by Gay, which will astonish future antiquaries; a pretty little picture by Vanloo, and a handful of ashes."

Perhaps Diderot thought, when he thus wrote, that the marchioness, in banishing the Jesuits, had shown a want of courage in not boldly protecting the Encyclopedists. Diderot should have known, that the philosophers were, in the eye of Louis XV., greater enemies of the throne, than they were of the altar. "If," said the king, "they destroy religion, it is that they may destroy the monarchy, for they attack the priests who form the first order in the state." Voltaire himself, born to live in courts, never found favor with Louis XV. Madame de Pompadour could not, except at the risk of losing the king's favor, openly encourage the freedom of thought and the press. At the time when the *Encyclopedia* was proscribed, Madame de Pompadour wrote as follows to Diderot: "I can do nothing in the matter of the *Encyclopedia*. It is said that there are in the book maxims opposed to religion and the authority of the king; if it is so, the book must be burnt; if it is not so, its libellers must be burnt; unfortunately, your accusers are ecclesiastics, and they never allow themselves to be in the wrong; notwithstanding, every one speaks well of you to me; your merit is esteemed, your virtue honored; upon such testimony, which is so honorable, I would be happy to be of service to you in any other matter." While writing thus to the author, the marchioness defended the book with much zeal. In the pastel by De la Tour, a volume of the *Encyclopedia* lies upon Madame de Pompadour's table.

How distant already are those times from us! I went to Versailles, in order to seek the shades of the court of Louis XV.; it appeared to me that I found a palace that had passed away a thousand years ago. I could no longer believe in the history I have just related. A court where they amused themselves, as in the garden of Armida, where the women were famous for their beauty and gallantry, where the heroes of the day disguised themselves as shepherds, in order to play a farce, where the king sang drinking-songs after supper; a court that had neither deputies nor national guards — where there was no suffrage exercised except to decide upon a hunting excursion — will all this be believed in a thousand years hence? Will not the historians of the eighteenth century be accused of having written an improbable romance of the times that intervened between the dignified reign of Louis XIV. and the terrible reign of Danton! But the romances written by God, are they not less probable than ours?

Montesquieu during his visit to Voltaire, was one day in Voltaire's magnificent saloon, which opened upon the lake of Geneva, in deep reflection at the sight of two portraits which hung as pendants to each other. They were Voltaire and Madame de Pompadour. The Duke de Richelieu, who had hurried from Lyons, to see Voltaire act in *l'Orphelin de la Chine*, took Montesquieu by surprise, while he was contemplating these two portraits.—"Well, president, you are studying grace and wit."—"Wit and grace, do you say!" replied Montesquieu; "you behold there the man and the woman who will be the representatives of our age."—Has not this prediction

almost come true? The seventeenth century is described as *the age of Louis XIV.:* would it not be more just to call the eighteenth century *the age of Voltaire and of Madame de Pompadour?* Study those two personages; you will find it all there.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR AS ARTIST.

Before establishing a seraglio for Louis XV., Madame de Pompadour offered him objects of a more honorable interest. She engraved some portraits of the court, and events of his reign. She engraved on copper and on stone. Her works are very rare. Even at the time when she engraved, it required the permission of the king for admission to see her engravings. She engraved on stone and copper the portraits of the king, the dauphin, the dauphiness, and of the Abbé de Bernis. I have not been able to find any of these portraits, nor her two famous engravings, in the style of the Flemish ivories. I have before me the twelve prints, representing the events of the reign of Louis XV.

The first is the triumph at Fontenoy. The king, crowned by Victory, is driving the dauphin in an antique car. Below this engraving, as well as below the others, there are these words: "*Pompadour sculpsit.*"

The second represents the victory of Lawfelt. Victory is trampling under her feet the arms, the standards, and the cannon of the enemy; she holds in one hand a crown, in the other an arrow; it is a fine figure, is well draped, and has altogether the character of the Victory of the ancients.

The third represents the preliminaries to the peace of 1748. The king is placed between Peace and Victory. He is represented as Hercules. Victory desires to carry him with her, but Peace presents him with a branch of olive, and points him to a battle-field, covered with verdure and the harvest.

The fourth is the birth of the Duke of Burgundy. France, represented, as a beautiful and powerful woman, covered with drapery, ornamented with *fleurs-de-lis*, is bending toward the child. Minerva protects France and the child with her shield. Madame de Pompadour has represented herself as Minerva, giving, however, her delicate features a little more force than they possessed.

The fifth represents France kneeling in supplication to Health, for the safety of the dauphin. According to the practice of the ancients, the sacred fire is burning upon an altar before the goddess. The figure of France is very beautiful. Very few cameos can show a head of so much character. Madame de Pompadour was a pagan of the golden age.

In the sixth, thanks are returned to Health. Love is winding garlands of flowers about her pedestal.

In the seventh, Apollo, in the person of Louis XV., is crowning the genius of sculpture and painting. The king is represented naked. He is holding in one hand a lyre, in the other, a crown. It appears to be an excellent likeness. The figure is beautiful, well-studied, and worthy of Apollo. The genius of painting and sculpture does not possess the same beauty. It is also represented naked, which gave rise to a good deal of scandal among the courtiers.

The eighth is Minerva protecting Engraving. The

figure of Madame de Pompadour is here seen, which appears very beautiful, even in the helmet and dress of a divinity. Genius follows her, and exhibits her armorial bearings, the three towers of Pompadour.

The ninth is the king's seal: France (it is always the marchioness!) holds in one hand the crown and escutcheon of France; in the other an iron sceptre, as they were in the habit of saying in those days.

The tenth is the alliance of Austria and France. France is Madame de Pompadour; Austria is Marie-Thérése. The torch of discord and the mask of hypocrisy are trampled under foot. This engraving is one of the most important.

The eleventh and twelfth, representing *The Genius of France*, and *The Victory of Lutzelberg*, have neither force nor beauty.

Madame de Pompadour did not always design her subjects. The celebrated Gay, who carved with so much art, transferred to cornelians and agates the designs of Boucher and Vanloo. Madame de Pompadour frequently engraved from these stones. But it sometimes occurred, that she suggested designs to Gay, who kept a set of artists' tools at Versailles.

She painted in pastel with a great deal of ease. La Tour had been her master. Voltaire one day took her by surprise with her pencil in her hand:—

> Pompadour, thy skill divine,
> On thine own portrait should essay;
> For never had a hand more fine,
> More beauteous features to portray.

For thanks, the marchioness presented Voltaire with her portrait, painted by herself.

Voltaire preserved the portrait with affection. It is not known what has become of it.

During the last years of her life, Madame de Pompadour often engraved the figures of Friendship, *Love and Friendship*, *Love sacrificing to Friendship*. She ordered of Boucher a *Temple of Friendship*. It was at this time that she wrote to the Marchioness de Boufflers: "This tells me that I am getting old; I am now on the borders."

THREE PAGES FROM THE LIFE OF DANCOURT.

In Decemher, 1684, a little chamber in the Rue St. Jacques excited the curiosity of the whole neighborhood. What was there mysterious about it? The door was always closed, the window rarely opened, except occasionally for a little sunlight or a song in the street. At such times there was visible a very pretty girl, in a coquettish and attractive dishabille, who leaned upon the window sill, smiling to the sun or the singer.

But in a moment the window is shut again; adieu to the sweet and romantic apparition. From without, this chamber conveyed an inexpressible idea of sadness and destitution; the window, dark and rusty, was detached from a completely dilapidated roof, where not a single bird rested in its flight; on the edge of the window where the water passed to the gutter, there was not a single crumb for the greedy sparrow who cries hunger so well in the month of December; the chimney all black rejoiced hardly an hour a day in a thin thread of smoke, which indicated but a poor fire. Within, the cham-

ber was hardly more attractive ; it was reached with great difficulty by a break-neck staircase, such as there still remains a few in the neighborhood of the Mont St. Geneviève ; after the staircase was a winding corridor, where it was moonlight at noonday ; at last stooping, you enter into a little room completely dilapidated, furnished with old rickety furniture. By what miracle is this pretty girl so badly lodged? It is very plain : there is a handsome young fellow in the case.

The handsome young fellow was Florent Dancourt. The pretty girl, Thérèse de la Thorillière. Dancourt was twenty-three. He was born at Fontainebleau, of a noble family, on the same day as the grand dauphin. Calvinism had nearly ruined his family. His father, desirous of making a good catholic of him, had confided his education to the Jesuits, who were without contradiction the best masters in the world. As " they rose at four o'clock in the morning to pray to God at eight o'clock in the evening," they could in the meantime improve the minds of their pupils. It is said that, for more than a century, they had the choice intellects of the youth of France. Father Delarue, charmed by the attractions and sallies of young Dancourt, wished to make him a Jesuit ; but Dancourt having already a presentiment of the intoxication of the profane passions, and the joyous adventures of inconstancy, was not to be seduced by religious solitude. At first, not knowing what to do with himself, he had studied law ; but he had hardly become an advocate, when falling desperately in love with a fashionable actress, he had turned out of his path for a piece of good luck. At

his own risk and peril he had courageously carried off the actress, and had taken refuge with her in this sad and miserable lodging in the Rue St. Jacques. Thérèse was the daughter of the celebrated actor La Thorillière; she had made a brilliant débût a short time previous. One evening at the close of the performance, Dancourt threw himself in her way, and without further preamble had carried her off literally speaking, while La Thorillière was arguing with Baron. We must admit that the beautiful Thérèse, like all women who allow themselves to be carried off, had only called for help on finding herself alone with her ravisher. He was a handsome fellow, it was an adventure, it was a scandal; how could she resist all this, and she moreover an actress? "You expected to have a bone to pick with some magnificent grandee," said Dancourt, near the church of St. Geneviève, pressing Thérèse to his heart; "undeceive yourself, I am only a poor gentleman, without house or home; but I love you to distraction. I would like to throw open a palace to you, but for this night I have only a poor chamber unworthy to receive you." Thérèse, who saw by the moonlight the tears of Dancourt, replied like an actress: "Your heart is a good resting-place." And thereupon the lovers departed for the seventh heaven, almost to the seventh story.

There they are, without money, scarcely sheltered, but at the mercy of God, and of love. Love is a marvellous host; love is ready money; he lavishes every moment, and on all occasions, his small change of kisses, melting glances, and languishing smiles. A poor devil with love in hand is richer than a

banker; but when love is gone, what is a glance, a smile, or a kiss? It is an empty purse. Let us see how time is passing in the apartment of our lovers. It is nearly three weeks since they are there; yet neither complains; they are far from the world, but the world, it is a girl who is adored, it is a lover who is loved. Their fare is poor, but it does not trouble them; they have no wood to warm them, but have they the time to warm themselves! They are happy, that is the whole story. However, if time passes quickly, love passes still more so. At the end of six weeks — must we admit it? — love was suffering the chills of December. Thérèse was the first to look toward the horizon; she began to think that love was beautiful and good, but by the side of love there was yet many loveable enjoyments. She regretted, in spite of herself, the stage and all that was connected with it. She was then seen leaning oftener from the window, even when Dancourt was there. However, she always loved her lover above all things; Dancourt wished to sacrifice everything to her, his name and his condition, his rank and his family. She was deeply touched with a worship so chivalric.

But M. Dancourt, the father, did not sing the same tune as M. Dancourt, the son. Having heard of his adventure (for the adventure had made a stir), he set out to lecture him; he finished by discovering the refuge of the lovers. One morning, as Dancourt opened the door to go out, he saw, with some degree of fear, the stern countenance of his father in the gloomy corridor. "Prodigal!" murmured the father, out of breath with having mounted so high.—"Prodigal?" said Dancourt, "come, then, and see all the money I

throw out of the window." The anger of the father vanished at the sight of his son's lodgings, and more especially as he caught a glimpse of Thérèse; who was one of the three or four most beautiful girls in Paris. "Well, my father, am I the prodigal son?"—"Is it the holy evangelist who teaches you to give way to your evil passions?"—"My recollection of what the evangelist says is not very good, but I do not believe that he condemns my heart, for it is not so much a pair of lovers you see before you as man and wife."—"Man and wife, sir! How dare you thus profane the divine laws of marriage? Be quick, and pack up your baggage, and return with me; your mother is dying with grief."—"My father, I will pray to God for you and my mother, if such is your desire, but I will not leave Mademoiselle de la Thorillière more than her shadow; I am hers as she is mine, the marriage will take place when it can; in the meantime, with your permission, we have made a regular theatrical marriage."—"I will never sanctify a union of this nature; farewell, sir, your only punishment shall be, to be left to your remorse."—"And I," said Thérèse, with an adorable smile, "will you not bid me farewell?" M. Dancourt returned to the apartment in spite of himself. "What!" said he, "a fine girl like you to lose your time in this manner! Believe me, leave there that fool who is as naked as a worm, who will make you acquainted with poverty but too soon; go and bloom in the sunshine."—"Is that all you have to say to me?" murmured Thérèse, wiping away two beautiful tears. "It is serious, then," said M. Dancourt, much moved. "The devil, my poor child, are you not aware that

between a gentleman and an actress, there is . . . ." —"Two hearts that understand one another," said Dancourt with impatience. This time the father, thoroughly provoked, left without saying a word.

The next day Dancourt, who was absent since morning, did not return till the afternoon. He entered, sad and more abstracted than usual.—"What is the matter with you?"—"I am a poor devil without resources! I tried to get a cause to argue, but clients avoid me; I endeavored to run in debt, but could not! It is high time, however, to quit this garret, which is only fit for summer lovers. It is open to all the winds, and trembles at the four cardinal points!"—"Yes," said Thérése, "let us be off. May God guide us! But where shall we go? An idea! let us go to my father, he will not on seeing us make all the grimaces that yours did yesterday."—"Another idea!" said Dancourt; "suppose I should turn actor?" —"Yes, yes!" eagerly exclaimed Thérése, who burned to reappear on the stage. On the moment, Dancourt and Thérése improvised several scenes.—"I have hit it!" said the actress, "you shall write plays, and you shall act them."—"Admirable!" said Dancourt, "it is the fates who speak by your mouth!" —They flew into each other's arms, gathered the few clothes scattered about the apartment, and left for ever this poor and sad abode. As they went down the Rue St. Jacques, Thérése turned round, raising her eyes.—"What ails you, dear love? how pale you are!"—Mademoiselle la Thorillière leaned trembling on the arm of her lover.

"I wished to see once again," she said, in a tearful voice, "the window that has lighted so much love!"

II.

One rainy November evening, in 1694, two men queerly dressed, walked arm-in-arm down the Rue de la Comédie. They did not appear to care much for the weather: they conversed like philosophers who were above all disappointments. One of them, however, rather more morose, shook occasionally his plumed beaver, as if to turn the little gutters, that threw the water upon his shoulders.—"It is all stuff," murmured he suddenly, as if recovering himself.—"The *Bagpipe* is no consolation for being hissed."—At this moment, the two philosophers stopped before this celebrated tavern, the sign of which was a bagpipe. While one knocked at the door, the other cried, "Oh, river of oblivion, I salute thee!"

The innkeeper came and opened the door.

"Gentlemen," said he, bowing, "you are welcome. You come in the nick of time. There are in the room Messieurs de Bellechaume, Boursault, and Fuselier, who have all the gayety of my Burgundy."—"It is more than gayety that we come to seek in your bottles; it is madness," said the more morose one of the two new-comers.—"Moreover," said the other, with a somewhat swaggering air, "I wish you to go to bed, and let your wife wait upon us."—"As you please, gentlemen."—Fuselier came to the door of the room.—"I should like much to see those gentlemen," said he in an insolent tone. At the sight of the two philosophers dripping with rain he could not restrain a burst of laughter.—"Oh, oh!" said he, "Dancourt and Baron: a Duke de Crispin and a Marquis de Mascarille!"—"Come, come," said Dancourt, with

a patronising air, "everybody has not been a swineherd like you. I have among my ancestors a knight of the garter. As for Baron, his name proves that there has been a baron in the family. But to-day, the most noble is he who drinks the most. Is not that your opinion, Bellechaume?"—"Yes," said the poet, "true nobility descends from the vine of Noah."—"Well, my poor Dancourt," said Boursault, with a pitiful air, "you have been hissed this evening?"—"You were at the theatre?"—"Not at yours; but I guess what took place there, for you never make so good an apology for wine as after a failure."—"Well guessed! Cheret, bring us something to drink. Adversity is the mother of philosophy! My daughter predicted this: 'Ah, my father, you are going to sup at the Bagpipe this evening!'"—Dancourt and Baron hung up their hats and swords while drinking a bottle of wine.—"It is very certain," said Dancourt, "that the gods were drunk when they created man!"—"They must have laughed heartily when they got sober," said Boursault.—"That is the reason why every mother's child of us is always acting. Petronius has said: *Mundus omnis agit histrioniam.*"—"Do not let us throw away our Latin," said Boursault, who did not understand a word; "it is already bad enough to murder French. But what is the matter with you, Bellechaume? you have grown as sad in a moment as if you were thinking of your mistress."—Bellechaume, already half-tipsy, sighed deeply: "*Sedes inter suspiria et lacrymas*," he murmured, to the great vexation of Boursault; "what is life?" he continued, with comical gravity.—"We know nothing about it, and

I am glad it is so," said Dancourt, "for if I knew what life was, I should be in great haste to find out what death was."—"Life," cried Baron, "is a string, of which God holds the two ends."—"And which the devil gives us to entangle," interrupted Dancourt; "what is your opinion, Fuselier? you have grown very quiet."—"He neither speaks nor thinks," said Baron, with his usual impertinence. Fuselier replied by tossing off a bumper.—"He has wit within," said Baron. —"That is not the worst kind," said Dancourt; "it is well worth your giddy brain. Some have wit both within and without, like you, like me, like all of us; we have wit on our lips, and at the nibs of our pens; others have wit neither within nor without; they are beasts that have a human face, like our brave innkeeper; is it not so, Angélique?"—The hostess smiled, and filled the glasses.

"Say, Fuselier," resumed Dancourt, "are you already drunk? What the devil are you doing there, stretched out under the table?"—"Making a comedy; the ideas only come to me when flat on the ground."—"But you, Bellechaume?" said Dancourt, "you are always between sighs and tears; your mistress has then been playing you some trick in her old style? One must expect everything from young fools of twenty."—"Alas!" said Bellechaume, "I am not thinking of my mistress, but of myself. I am already thirty; and beyond that, what is there worth living for?"—"How should I know?" replied Dancourt. "You should remember the old fable which states that Jupiter had apportioned thirty years as the life of man. But afterward, wishing to enjoy for a longer time, the strange spectacle of his creation,

Jupiter gave him sixty additional years, and in order to leave the original plan undisturbed, took twenty from the ass, twenty from the dog, and twenty from the ape. Thus we are more or less men until thirty; from thirty until fifty, more or less asses; we carry our cross, we are overpowered by labor, we drag home with difficulty the necessaries for our families; from fifty to seventy, we growl and bark like a snarling dog, unable to find pleasure in anything; the last twenty years, we are only a pitiful counterfeit of infancy. We imitate only follies and and trifles, we are as grim and ugly as the ape."—"Angélique, fill Dancourt's glass; let us have another bottle, he speaks like an oracle."—"The actresses are not coming, then, to sup this evening?"—"A fine question, truly!" said Baron raising his head with the air of an Adonis; "the actresses are a flock of lost sheep that I drive before me. They saw me leave for the *Bagpipe*, they will come to the *Bagpipe* Do you not hear that carriage stopping at the door?"

The hostess left the jolly tipplers to go to the newcomers. Four pretty women got out of the carriage and unceremoniously entered the tavern. "Get us a supper for a queen," said the first.—"For a queen of the theatre," said the second.—"Stewed hares and ambrosia."—"Nectar, and a ragout."—"Venison as untamed as my virtue."—"A garland of quails."—While saying this, these ladies went up stairs to a room called the *Paphian Retreat.* "Well," said Baron, coming into the entry, "there are the birds flying off."—"Those birds do not sing for you," said the hostess jeeringly, "they are none of your high-flyers."—"Look at that coachman! he has his beard

trimmed like a coachman of respectability; and those servants more bedizened with lace than footmen on a gala-day. Go, you, and drink with your equals, good master-actor."—"Gothon, Jacqueline, Margot, go and wait upon those ladies."—"You, Chrysostome, see that you kindle all the fires."—"Gentlemen," said Baron, after having teazed the hostess, "if you have courage, let us go and lay siege, above there."—"Forward," said Bellechaume, seizing his sword. "A moment," said Dancourt, who was very hungry; "let us wait till those duchesses sit down to supper; if we can not lay siege around the table, we can at least lay siege to the table."—"Well said; the table, the wine upon it, the women around it, there is the banquet of life, there is the wisdom of Solomon."—"Philosophy," resumed Dancourt, "drags itself along like a tortoise, in search of science; love crowned with vine-leaves flies with outstretched wings." Thereupon, Dancourt drained his own glass, and that of his neighbor. "Take care, Dancourt," said Boursault, who was the most sober of the five, "the pitcher that goes too often to the well . . . ."—"You are a simpleton. I have nothing to fear; my pitcher does not go the well but to the wine-cask."—"See, the dishes are going up," said Baron, "who will follow me?"—"All of us!"

Fuselier rose; the hostess wished to interfere, but our philosophers in action scrambled up the stairs four steps at a time. But Margot and Gothon came out of the *Paphian retreat*, and stood bravely on guard. "Who goes there?"—"Love!" cried Baron.—"Wine!" cried Dancourt. "You can not pass." Baron seized Margot by the waist, and whirled her

aside. "We can pass everywhere," said he. Gothon flew to the aid of Margot, but Bellechaume seized her by the petticoat; Jacqueline came to the assistance of Gothon, but Boursault interfered. There were cries, struggles, roars of laughter loud enough to wake the watch. The philosophers soon had the best of it. They knocked at the door of the apartment. "I need only give my name," said Baron, "they will immediately open the door. Open to us, for the love of God and your neighbor."—"Get you gone, you wretched actors," said a voice from within; "we can do nothing for you."—"Don't give yourselves such airs," said Dancourt; "know that I am the author of a piece that was hissed this evening at the theatre."—"It was I who hissed the loudest," cried another voice.—"Well, open then, my love, that I may thank you."—"Are you not ashamed," resumed the same voice, "to come and drink at the *Bagpipe*, while Madame Dancourt sits alone wearily waiting in the chimney-corner? Take care, the bird of ill omen may perhaps sing for you."—"Pshaw! my wife is six-and-thirty, and begins to get steady, like weather-cocks that grow rusty." Hardly had Dancourt spoken, when the door opened, as if by magic, and he received a tingling slap on the face. "Again," said he, with vexation, "that blow came from my wife!"—"Alas!" said Baron, who also recognised his wife, "this is no place for us." However, they seated themselves at the table, and supped gayly. Dancourt made numberless witticisms, one for each glass. "With all your wit," said Boursault, who saw with dismay the evil moment arriving, "you can not prevent us from pay-

ing for the supper." Dancourt, whose resources were not yet exhausted, called the hostess. "Angélique," said he, taking her by the hand, "I am going to give you a lesson in astronomy. Have you not heard of that great platonic year, when everything must return to its first condition? Know then that in sixteen thousand years we shall be again here drinking on the same day and at the same hour. Will you give us credit till then?" The hostess reflected a moment. "I am perfectly willing," said she; "but it is just sixteen thousand years to a day that you were here drinking; you left without paying me; settle the old score, and I will give you credit on the new."

III.

We are in the palmy days of the regency; the joyous Parisian passions which Madame de Maintenon had somewhat fettered with boxwood rosaries, proudly raised their head again in the presence of Philippe d'Orleans, De la Parabère, and De la Phalaris. It is no longer the time to seek salvation; one throws his soul at every pretty sin, with all the affected carelessness of a younger son or an actress. It is the débût of that masquerade, so gay, so brilliant, so distracted, whose giddy whirl was destined to stop, in 1792, repentant before the guillotine. But it is not exactly a comedy of the regency that we are going to see; the picture which calls our attention is more serious.

In a corner of Berry, in the bottom of a valley, shaded by large forests, at the foot of a rock-crowned

mountain, do you not see those two pointed towers, round which creep two magnificent grape-vines? You are at the door of an old ruined manorhouse, which seems inhabited only by owls and bats; the house is completely dilapidated; the last wind has half detached the gutter from the façade, and broken almost all the glass in the two upper windows. The court is deserted, neglected weeds have surrounded the mossy pavement for many a year. No joyous barking marks your approach, that barking of the dog which awakens the heart in advance. This chateau is then a den of robbers, or of phantoms? Is it a resort for counterfeiters? Do witches hold their vigils there? Reassure yourself; see down there those two swallows' nests at one of those windows: these sweets birds are omens of good fortune, and never build their nests in the desert. Besides, do you not see that smoking chimney? Enter without fear, it is a pious solitude where you will be received in the spirit of Christ.

Before the large chimney of gothic-carved stone, two men are warming themselves. One, nearly eighty, is the venerable hermit of the neighborhood; he stirs the fire with a large white staff, on which he has marked a cross in double lines; the other, who is not sixty, is the occupant of the manor; he seems older and more worn than the hermit; he has muffled himself up since a short time in the long gown of a Benedictine, which does not help to enliven his pale and sombre face. His bent brow seems tormented by recollection. These two old men were well contrasted; the hermit indicated, by the serenity of his brow, by his calm but almost extinguished

glance, by his smile of beatitude, that he had passed a life without storms, in the peace of God; the other revealed to you at the first glance, that he had passed through all human passions; he had been beaten by the tempest; he had loved, he had suffered; he had drunk from every cup of profanation; but the intoxication he found there has left but bitterness upon his lips. He now aspires to the divine chalice. Do you recognise Dancourt? Dancourt, whom you saw a short time since on the boards of the theatre, or the floor of the pothouse! It is almost a metamorphosis of Ovid. But do not let us lose sight of this strange picture. The two recluses conversed in Latin; the old hermit remarks from time to time that they would understand each other better in French; but Dancourt replies, that having played comedy in French, he must work out his salvation in Latin; besides, this cursed language of Rabelais and La Fontaine recalls too many profane recollections. "Ah, Brother Montain," said Dancourt, suddenly carried away by his feelings, "if you knew all the joyous pastimes of my life! But, silence! silence!"—"Continue, my brother," murmured the hermit, his curiosity somewhat excited; "am I not a confessor?"—"Twenty years ago, I was the first comedian in France; I wrote comedies in the morning, and I performed them in the evening amid bursts of laughter from the courtiers and men of wit. I possessed the finest friends in the world; look at this diamond, which will be sold at my death for the benefit of the poor. This diamond, which is worth over a thousand pistoles, was placed on my finger by a Bavarian prince, who said that my wit would sparkle much longer. Louis

XIV. has frequently extended to me his handsome and more than royal hand. There was in the palace of Louis XIV., a mysterious cabinet, of which Madame de Montespan alone had the key. I had my private admissions into this paradise, a particular favor which was only granted to Dufresny. One day I was reading a comedy of my own to the great king and his haughty favorite; there was a large fire in the cabinet. Madame de Montespan looked at me ardently (I was an actor, a quasi nobleman); these glances, so scornful, which rested so sweetly upon me, agitated me so much, that I was near fainting. "The fire affects you, Dancourt," exclaimed Louis XIV., with emotion, and in his solicitude he hastened to open the window. "Ah, if he had known what fire affected me."

Dancourt sighed from regret and repentance, at the same time, "At another time," continued he, with a proud smile, "I performed *Le Misanthrope* at the theatre; I was inspired to play well by the sight of Madame de Montespan, who had always for me her soft glances. At the end of the piece she caused me to be called in front of the stage; she extended to me her hand; I kissed it with all my heart; she was so unrestrained that she pressed her hand strongly to my lips. . . But let us speak no more of it; in mercy, let us extinguish the last sparks. . . ."

Dancourt extended his hands as if to drive away these phantoms of his gay life. "Come, my brother, night is already approaching; you have no time to lose to regain your hermitage. Do you see that the sun is setting?" The two recluses rose and went toward the staircase. "After all," said the hermit,

who occasionally suffered himself to be carried away by the smiling picture of Dancourt's life, "if God grants you, for the sake of your great repentance, the remission of your sins, you will have no reason to regret having passed your happy days so gayly."—"Who knows if God will set to my account the days piously passed in weariness? Do you believe, my brother, that the road to Paradise can be opened to an actor, who has laughed at God and the devil?"—"Alas! my brother, the Almighty has placed purgatory upon the road to Paradise." Dancourt could not refrain from a witty reply: "Like the *Bagpipe*, on the road to *La Comédie*." The hermit had descended the staircase; he bowed, smiled, and departed in silence.

Dancourt, who became sadder as he found himself alone, passed through two large halls almost bare; he reached a small apartment, where a woman of his own age was asleep in an arm-chair: "Thérése," he said to her with a tone of affection, "wake up, for I wish to get supper early."—"The chicken is not cooked," said Madame Dancourt.—"The chicken! Are you not quite sure that to-day is not a vigil and fast?"—"Well, well, you can mumble one prayer the more."—"My poor Thérése, you will always be young and foolish. Your white hairs should warn you that the time to seek your salvation has long since arrived."—"I do not care so much about death as you do. Why should I repent? For having laughed too much myself and made others laugh too much? The kind God will not damn me for that . . . . Ursule, come and set the table and get supper ready . . . . By-the-by, Dancourt, have you read your daughters'

letters over again? Do you know that they have both of them, got into fashionable society by their marriage? You see, the theatre is an opening to everything."—"It is no opening to heaven, my poor Thérèse!"—"Ah!" murmured Madame Dancourt, "there he is off again; I am quite sure he has translated a psalm of David to-day; all poets have their eccentricities."

Dancourt supped in silence with two *aves* and four signs of the cross; he then went out, after having kissed his wife upon the forehead. He traversed all the apartments of the house, he descended into the garden, and advanced, absorbed in meditation, toward the chapel. As he raised his eyes to heaven, he saw the stars shining: "*Laudate eum, omnes stellæ et lumen*," he murmured. He entered the chapel where two earthen lamps were burning day and night. This chapel was adorned with a large ivory Christ, with an altar of carved wood, which supported a large block of stone intended to represent St. Benedict; but what especially caught the eye on entering, was a marble tomb lying under the ivory Christ. This tomb, which was half open, had been brought there by the order of Dancourt. "That is my lodging for eternity," said he with a gloomy smile. He took up a spade in the corner of the chapel, and dug his grave at the foot of the tomb, where the pavement had been removed. "I am much afraid," he said, as he wiped his brow, "that death will work faster than I do." He laid down his spade, took up from the altar the psalms of David, approached the tomb and lay down in it. It was not without difficulty that he got into that funer-

eal couch, where we are so cold and so lonely, but where we sleep, he who had formerly got so easily into beds of much more difficult access. As he lay down, he repeated these words of the canticle of St. Benedict: "The passions compassed me about on all sides like bees; they attacked me fiercely, like a fire that burns in the thorns, *et in nomine Domini quia ultus sum in eos.*"

When Dancourt left the tomb, he shook his shoulders as if he felt the icy hands of death. He walked up and down in the chapel wishing to continue his translation of the psalms.

Grant me a holy death, O Lord,
Pass my transgressions by,
That I may reach the blest abode,
Where the archangels lie.

"Alas!" said Dancourt, "those archangels lie for the sake of the rhyme. But after all it is not the will that I lack." When he had after a fashion translated the whole psalm, he went and lay down by the side of his good Thérése, who was not yet as icy as death.

For eighteen months, Dancourt, weak in mind as in body, led this Trappist life. All his latter days passed pretty much in this manner. He died a fervent catholic, assisted by the old hermit who soon followed him. Madame Dancourt had gone before him to the abode of the dead.

His daughter Marion came and watched over him in his last days. At the last solemn hour, Dancourt took his daughter's hand, turning to the hermit: "Father, do you believe that I will go to Paradise?"

—"The doors of Paradise are open to all repentant sinners."—"But I have taken so short a time to repent, I am a great sinner; as St. Augustine has said: 'I have scattered sin by the handful.'"—"Father," said Marion Dancourt, "a man who dies well is half saved."—"God's will be done!" murmured Dancourt, with a voice almost inaudible, "my grave is dug .... My last bed is made ...." Dancourt, who was already wandering, exercised no control over his tongue, so accustomed to lively sallies: "Yes, my bed is made; as we make our bed so we must lie."

When his daughter gave an account of this strange death in society, people could scarcely believe her words. "Dancourt a hermit!"—"Dancourt die a good Christian!"—"The devil," said Voltaire, "is quite capable of having played him that trick."

Dancourt at his death, had begged his daughter to burn his comedies and songs. But by a mistake quite diabolical, Marion Dancourt, who did not look very closely into the matter, burned the translation of the Psalms of David, the poetical fruit of the actor's repentance.

IV.

It may be said of Dancourt, that he had wit when a little mellow; that wit of wild gayety that had a strong bias for farce and avoids serious comedy. He took no care to restrain it; he gave it full head. Farce requires extravagance, fire, intoxication, wit. Like the Italians, Dancourt was a great master in this line. There were two men in Molière: one who indulged in raillery not for the mere pleasure of ridi-

cule, but to wither; another, who laughed with a free burst of laughter, by way of relaxation. Dancourt was but the echo of this burst of laughter, but that is already something. Voltaire used to say of him; "What Regnard was in relation to Molière in high comedy, Dancourt, the actor, was in farce." —There is a little injustice in this sentence, for, without intending it, I imagine that Dancourt in his farcical pictures sometimes rose to true comedy, by some fine trait of humor and philosophy.

There has always been a refuge for Gayety in France. Before acting, Gayety sang, sang laughingly, braving everything. She went like a thoughtless bee, and buzzed everywhere, even in the ear of Mazarin. When Molière came, Gayety assumed with him by mutual agreement, all the metamorphoses of the stage. When Molière died, Gayety, lamed by this fatal accident, departed to seek a substitute in Regnard and Dancourt. Dancourt received her boldly. —"She is my love, she is my soul; I abandon myself to her without thought. She does with me what she chooses; she has taken from me the little wit that I had. Accordingly, when I speak or write, it is she that guides my tongue or my pen. You see it is not my fault if my tongue sometimes trips, and my pen goes wrong."—Louis XIV., however, was verging on his decline; fortune became rebellious in his failing hands. The misfortunes of the kingdom, the icy countenance of Madame de Maintenon, all threw over the brow rather than over the heart, a veil of austerity of which hypocrisy had woven the better part. Gallantry, but now so brilliant at court, was banished to the confessional; wit, which had cast

such brilliancy around the great king, had just muffled itself in the garb of a Jansenist; Gayety alone, thanks to Dancourt, still played her pranks. Louis XIV., wholly taken up with thoughts of his salvation, left, as was said, the profane to a gay damnation! There must be laughter somewhere, he said to Dancourt, during their last interview. The theatre was then, toward the end of the reign, the sole refuge of Gayety; so she indulged herself to her heart's content with her friend Dancourt. She threw aside the amiable delicacy and agreeable prettiness of Benserade; she again became a free wanton with careless gait, as in the time of Hardi and Duhamel. She appeared again almost as wild as in *les Galanteries du Duc d'Ossone*. But Louis XIV. was hardly dead, when Gayety abandoned Dancourt for the Regent, Comedy for the saturnalia. Dancourt was no longer successful; he no longer found anything of consequence to say or act. In his turn, he went to think of repentance. Like David Teniers and Van Ostade, Dancourt, whether in his acting or his pieces, knew how to paint truth with a certain exaggeration in the drawing and color, which strikes us and pleases us more than truth itself. In fact, Teniers' topers and Dancourt's characters would appear to us insipid enough without the assistance of the painter and the poet. Dancourt had not the power to seize, like Molière, those characters whose great features are traced for every age; he has confined his feeble glance within the range of his own time. Accordingly, we find better studies on the manners of the seventeenth century in the farces of Dancourt than in the comedies of Molière.

Dancourt rhymed in his idle days a lamentable tragedy, of which there is little to be said; but we have some fables and some tales of his, very prettily turned, like *les Pots cassés*, and *l'Oraison*. The tale could not, without great liberty, be presented here, but you will thank me for reproducing the fable:—

THE BROKEN POTS.

(Les Pots Cassés.)

The broken pots are all the talk to-day.
See, safe and sound upon the stream there stray
Two pots both differing in form and mould,
Of metal one, with decorations bold,
Proud, without care or fear, pursued its way.

And one more humbly went, a pot of clay,
From its strong neighbor keeping far away,
Fearing it might augment, by current rolled,
The broken pots.

The timid pot this moral will display:
That when the humble would himself array,
Among the great companionship to hold,
The great will ever keep untouched his gold,
And leave the humble usually to pay
The broken pots.

MADAME DE LA POPELINIERE.

A few days since, I met Madame de la Popelinière in very bad company, that is to say, exposed in the window of a curiosity shop, on the Quai Voltaire, between the portrait of a libertine abbé, and a Flemish festival by Brauwer. An expression of poetic sadness attracted me toward Madame de la Popelinière. I soon recognised a pastel in La Tour's best style, but the colors had faded. I saluted at the same time the work of the artist and the face of the woman with the most serious air possible, forgetting that I had the arm of the most satirical of all my friends.

He looked at me, laughing. "Who is then," he asked, "this old acquaintance, who smiles so sadly, with her scarf of azure, her powdered hair, and her bare shoulder?"—"Look well at her, my dear fellow, if you wish to see a woman who loved deeply, it is nearly a century ago."—"Beautiful eyes," he continued, "an adorable oval, a charming mouth, a neck proud and flexible. I can not well discover if that woman has loved deeply, but I do not doubt that she has been loved passionately. The name of

the lady, if you please?"—"It is a granddaughter of Dancourt. She was a long time known as Mademoiselle Deshayes; her historical name is Madame de la Popelinière."—"Excellent, why the dickens do you talk to me of serious passion? Madame de la Popelinière threw her heart to every wind, as did all those who were born under the regency. A profound feeling never agitated those defiled hearts."—"Who is it that told you that?"—"All the books."—"And you take them on trust?"—"To whom am I to refer?"—"To yourself, to your own mind, to your own heart. Passion can change itself a thousand times without ceasing to be passion. A hundred years ago it laughed; to-day it weeps. But under the smile as under the tears, it is always the same heart which beats, is agitated, and which suffers. Just look at those eyes and those lips of Madame de la Popelinière; she smiles with the sly grace of 1750; but even in this smile do you not discover a hidden sorrow? Whoever passes too quickly before this gallery of pastels, does not know the first word of the private history of the eighteenth century. Besides, we must blame the painters, who are the historians for the eye. Because La Tour has painted a hundred marchionesses with the same brilliancy, the same trifling and mocking expression, must we conclude that he thus saw all of them? By no means, it was his manner of painting. La Tour, like Mignard, like all the portrait-painters, had in his imagination a certain ideal which concealed the truth from him. But truth never lost its rights; do you not see it through this pretty smile? Believe me, this poor woman, exposed to-day as a curiosity,

has loved and has suffered when she was an actress, a great lady, or a forsaken woman. It is a drama in three acts."

Saying these words, I entered the shop, and asked the price of the portrait. "It is the portrait of a celebrated actress, whose name I do not know; you may have it for the price of the frame, fifty francs."

I was unwilling to cheapen so pretty a face. I carried away myself the granddaughter of Dancourt, swearing at the same time to avenge her for the injuries of time and of history.

II.

In 1750, in one of the most sumptuous saloons of the Rue de Richelieu, the mistress of the place, seated or rather lost in an immense arm-chair, covered with flowered silk, was engaged toward seven o'clock in the evening, before a fine fire which gave out an oriental aroma, in a desperate fight with Monsieur Fanfreluche. It was a mode of killing time and of waiting, without too much impatience, for another monsieur. The lap-dog's weapons were his yelps, his white teeth, and his black paws; the lady had for her defence only a very delicate fan by Pater, which had already given some fifty taps to great people, for instance to the Maréchal de Richelieu, the Maréchal de Saxe, the Maréchal de Lowendal. However, the lady was neither a duchess nor a marchioness, but she was beautiful, and from time immemorial, beauty has always had the most triumphant emblazonments of the great book of heraldry. Besides, our heroine was not a little

burgher's wife of the Marais, subscriber to the *Mercure de France;* she was a lady of high degree, after all, since Monsieur de la Popelinière had married her with the right hand. It is true that he began by marrying her with the left.

In the meantime, a great rogue of a lacquey, the seams of his clothes laid down with gold lace, came and presented a letter to Madame de la Popelinière on a silver salver, chased with great skill by Réveil.

As soon as the lacquey had turned his back, Madame de la Popelinière, pale and impatient, kissed the letter, and cut with her pretty teeth the thread of silk which fastened it. "It is wonderful," said she; "La Rose had scarcely opened the door, when I had a presentiment of a letter from Monsieur de Richelieu." Monsieur Fanfreluche did not cease to snap and spring toward his mistress in his playfulness; Madame de la Popelinière yielded her fan to him to be able to read in peace the love-letter, which was written upon paper so coarse that a cook of the present day would not use it for his accounts. It is true that a cook of the present day writes more correctly than a maréchal of France a hundred years ago.

Here is what history has preserved of this letter:—

"My love: I am sorry, if I can not come down this evening to die at your feet; I am detained at the court, but your image will be there with me; however, toward ten o'clock, I may surprise you during the gayeties of supper, for I hope . . ."

Madame de la Popelinière was thus far when the door opened with a great noise; she recognised the

financier by this uproar and bad taste, and in her fright she threw the letter into the fire. "So much the wind bears off," said Monsieur de la Popelinière, saluting his wife ironically.

He was followed by a hired wit. A nobleman kept poets then as the marchioness did little dogs; the financier gave twelve hundred livres to his; it was little, but his wit was Marmontel, just the wit for a financier. Do not let us forget to remark here that the true poets then, as now-a-days, were only paid by the public. The public gives glory in giving its money. "Marmontel, sit you there," said Monsieur de la Popelinière, drawing an arm-chair close to his wife. He went himself and leaned carelessly against the chimney. Marmontel paid all sorts of clumsy compliments to Madame de la Popelinière; inquired after her health and her dog. She did not seem to hear him, which in fact almost always happened. To some one who had remarked it to her, she had replied, that Marmontel, being paid as a newspaper, a reply was not expected.

But this evening especially she was so far from the wit of Marmontel! She followed sadly with her eyes, blue as the violet, the destiny of the Duke de Richelieu's letter, which had disappeared in the flames. "Is it not true, madame," said her husband pointedly, "that your reflections run thus: passions are like the letter you have just burnt, a little smoke, a little flame, a little ashes?"

Madame de la Popelinière armed herself with her most charming smile. "Really, sir," said she, "I believe, at present, you are witty."—"No, madame," replied the financier, somewhat coarsely. "I have

no wit, but I have a heart; it is there that you have wounded me."—"Ah, good heavens!" said Marmontel, who presaged a storm, "I have forgotten to write to Mademoiselle Clairon!" He rose to leave. "No! you will remain here," said Monsieur de la Popelinière, in a decided tone; "you belong to the family, there is no secret for you; do you not know that Maréchal de Richelieu. . . ."—"I know nothing at all," said Marmontel, precipitately; "such things, as the Arabian poet has said, are written upon the winds or upon the waves."

Madame de la Popelinière raised her hand to her heart.—"Well," said she, looking at her husband, "I am waiting for your accusation; I am sure that Monsieur Marmontel will be my advocate."—"Well, madame, you love Monsieur de Richelieu, or, at least, you permit Monsieur de Richelieu to love you."—"I admit, Monsieur, that I permit all the world to do that."—"Madame de la Popelinière is like the sun," said Marmontel, "we aspire to him, but he stoops to none."—"A figure of rhetoric, the simile of a poet," said Monsieur de la Popelinière; "it has not common sense; for my part, I shall speak plainly; listen to the facts of the case . . . . . do not interrupt me, madame."—"I am content if I am not obliged to listen to you."

Madame de la Popelinière took her fan again, and recommenced the war with Monsieur Fanfreluche.—"If my memory is good," resumed the financier, "your grandfather was an actor; he was, in fact, the good fellow Dancourt; your grandmother was an actress; she was the beautiful La Thorillière; your mother was an actress; she was the celebrated Mimi Dan-

court; finally, you yourself, madame, you have been an actress, and you are still acting."—Here, the financier, content with his preamble, opened his snuff-box, took a pinch, and jingled his seals.—"And besides," said he, shaking his head, "if you had always been content to act comedy! But you wished to make one; and I was taken, like a simpleton, by your stage-tricks! That is the reason you bear the title of Madame de la Popelinière."—"Say, the name, not the title, sir," said she, with charming disdain.—"Yes, yes! I had an hotel, equipages, plenty of money. I only wanted a mistress (for such is the fashion to-day, unless we can be like Monsieur de Richelieu, the husband of all wives); I went to you; you came to me; and then, after the honeymoon, you set yourself to weeping crocodile-tears! You threw yourself at my feet, to induce me to give you my hand; I was only willing to give you my heart; seeing you could obtain nothing more from me, (I do not speak of my fortune,) you went and threw yourself at the feet of that jade Madame de Tencin, bewailing your virtue like the women of the Bible, after which you went and threw yourself at the feet of the Cardinal de Tencin, parading your tears, but more especially your beautiful eyes. It was the period when contracts were to be renewed. The Cardinal de Tencin called me before him, and told me without ceremony, that the king, his master, had fully determined not to grant the contract I held except to him who should marry Mademoiselle Deshayes, the granddaughter of Dancourt, a model of virtue, grace, and wit. One can not be too grateful for it, madame!"—"Well," said Madame de la Popelinière, impatiently, "you acknowledge yourself, that I

brought you, as a marriage-portion, the half of your fortune, by this renewal of your contract. Do you imagine, Monsieur de la Po-pe-li-niè-re, that I am grateful to you for the name you have given me? You did so with sufficiently bad grace; you took me to a notary, who drew up in bad style a marriage-contract. You have given me, in case I survive you, just sufficient to buy mourning! Afterward, you took me one morning to the church, when I was hardly awake, through a pouring rain; they married us like beggars in a chapel where I took cold. That was the whole ceremony."—"This might be called the *forced marriage*," said Marmontel.—"And the conclusion of all this?" asked Madame de la Popelinière.—"The conclusion," said the farmer of the revenue, "is, that I have been played upon, and I do not intend to be for the future. I warn you, madame, that I shall myself request the Duke de Richelieu to go and carry the war elsewhere."—"Take care," said Marmontel; "lovers who are put out of the door return always by the window."

It is known, that Monsieur de Richelieu returned by the chimney.

At this instant three or four guests entered, for they supped in gay company every evening at the house of the farmer of the revenue.—"Ah! it is you, La Tour. What a charming portrait of yours I have seen, that of Mademoiselle Gaussin."—La Tour entered with a serious air, like an abstracted man.—"Believe me," said he to the financier, "there is a storm in the horizon, war on one side, a king who slumbers, a parliament which dots its *i s*, Jesuits who spread théir spiders' webs everywhere!"

It is known that La Tour was a profound politician, who while planting roses in the cheeks of his portraits, saw into the future of nations.—"We have no marine," said he one day to Louis XV.—"And those of Vernet?" said the king to the painter.

Carle Vanloo, who followed La Tour, did not trouble himself about politics; he had the spirit of his art, and did not seek any other. He gayly approached Madame de la Popelinière, and asked if she would be beautiful the next day, so that he could finish her portrait.

Rameau and Vaucanson, two celebrated men, the most silent of the eighteenth century when they talked so much; Fontenelle and Montcrif; two names less known were announced amid the picturesque confusion of a conversation already animated. There was the Marquis de Meuse, the Count de Guiche, then an abbé without an abbey, a poet without poetry, a marquis without a marquisate. Some women came in their turn, free women of the time, Madame de Tencin and Mademoiselle Verrières, not entirely women of the world, but actresses in every sense.

Madame de la Popelinière, in spite of all the noise and all the movement about her, still felt herself alone. Her glance wandered from the clock to the entrance. They spoke to her, but she only heard the voice of him who was not there.

A solemn announcement was made that supper was ready. They passed into the dining-room, painted by Oudry. The table appeared like a fairy scene; never had a farmer of the revenue displayed so much luxury in Saxony porcelain, Bohemian glass, and rare flowers.

Rameau seated himself absently by the side of Madame de la Popelinière. No one dared to take the other side. The place of honor was for the absent, according to the ironical remark of M. de la Popelinière.

There had been no wit, but there had been already much eating when the Duke de Richelieu entered.

M. de la Popelinière rose suddenly as if inspired. "Monsieur, the duke, will you take my place? for I am determined to take possession of yours."

Saying these words, M. de la Popelinière advanced bravely to the side of his wife.

M. de Richelieu confessed himself beaten, and after having saluted Madame de la Popelinière, went with sufficiently good grace and took possession of the seat of his host. All the guests looked at each other knowingly. "I said," resumed La Tour, "that there was a tempest in the horizon."—"Yes, monsieur," said the farmer of the revenue surlily, "it is I who direct it, it will burst like thunder."—"What a fine subject for a picture," said Madame de Tencin to Carle Vanloo, "M. de la Popelinière directing the clouds like the Eternal Father, with a radiant brow and an Olympian eyebrow!"

At the end of the supper, Richelieu approached Vaucanson. "Monsieur, you would be able to create the world if God had not done so before you, can you inform me how one can enter a house when the door is closed?"—"One can not enter," said Vaucanson, scarcely knowing what he said.

III.

The next day the duke prowled about the hotel; he soon remarked that there was a little house with its back to one of the wings. He entered this house, whose only tenant was a performer on the hautboy at the opera, an old musician, who passed his life in copying music. M. de Richelieu offered to pay his rent on condition that he (Richelieu), might at his pleasure, occupy a room in the house at certain hours. The old musician joyfully accepted. The same day the duke returned with a locksmith and a mason, to put the apartment in a habitable condition. This room was only separated by a party-wall from a little back-parlor where Madame de la Popelinière had her harpsichord, her library, and a couch, which afterward became her usual bed. She had timely notice, Richelieu having met her again at the *fêtes* in honor of the marriage of the dauphin with the infanta of Spain. The mason and locksmith set to work at once. The wall was opened in Madame de la Popelinière's chimney; the locksmith took out the iron back of the chimney, and replaced it very artistically upon an imperceptible hinge, which allowed it to open at pleasure.

M. de Richelieu was delighted with this new abode; he went there every day; he sometimes spent the whole night there, doubtless studying the art of war. His fair neighbor did not complain. "It is astonishing," said M. de la Popelinière, one day to Marmontel, "my wife has taken a fancy for solitude. She is probably living in repentance since

I had the wit to get rid of the Duke de Richelieu. We need never despair of women. She passes all her time in reading Bossuet and Fénelon; I surprised her yesterday playing church music on her harpsichord. Six weeks ago she was running after all the extravagance and follies of the world. Now she shuts herself up at home like Penelope or Lucretia.

In the evening during supper, Madame de la Popelinière excused herself to the only guest present, and retired to the little parlor. When the farmer of the revenue presented himself, he was received as a tedious person who is not expected. He remarked, not without surprise, that his wife was not reading, nor playing on the harpsichord. Although she was not going out that evening, she was wholly occupied in dressing her hair. She had just fastened in it a bouquet of Spanish jessamine, newly plucked from a flower-stand of Sèvres china. The untimely visit of her husband caused her a real anxiety, for he was not the person she expected. "Do you wish to ask of me a quarter of an hour's conversation?" said she, walking up and down.—"I confess to you, madame, that I come here from curiosity; you find yourself so well off here, that I wish to repose myself here for a while from my cares. Confess, madame, that since I have shut my door to the conquerors who only fight against the honor of husbands, quiet has returned to everybody, to you as well as me."—"Yes, sir, congratulate yourself. . ."

At this moment the Duke de Richelieu came to the other side of the wall. A signal sounded on the back of the chimney. Madame de la Popelinière turned pale. "What did I hear?" asked Monsieur

de la Popelinière, turning his ear toward the chimney.—"Probably," said she, with an absent air, "they are lighting the fire on the other side. This neighbor is sometimes troublesome; he is a hautboy-player. . ."

A second signal sounded. "What an impertinent fellow!" continued Madame de la Popelinière; "stay a moment, I will let him know there is somebody here."

Madame de la Popelinière took the tongs and knocked twice against the back of the chimney. It was the counter signal. "If you wish, madame, I will give orders that your neighbor shall restrain his musical genius; besides, perhaps, this wall is not a party wall. . ."—"Do not think of it, sir; I should be very sorry to interfere with the habits of this hautboy-player, whom I love to hear sometimes."

Some days after this intended assignation, Monsieur de la Popelinière received an anonymous letter in the following terms:—

"I know not if it be the devil, but every night a lover gains admittance to Madame de la Popelinière, without passing either by the door or the window."

The following night, Monsieur de la Popelinière mounted guard at the door of the little parlor. He soon perceived that his wife was not alone. He heard one voice answering another. "Madame," he cried, with a loud voice, "the house is on fire!" The waiting-woman, who was asleep in a neighboring room, like a negligent sentinel (history says by treachery), almost immediately opened the door to the farmer of the revenue.

He entered, like Louis XIV. into the parliament,

completely booted and spurred. Monsieur de la Popelinière was better armed than Louis XIV., for he carried a whip in one hand and a candlestick in the other. He went straight to the bed of his wife. *She slept* upon a single pillow, with a candor that disarmed his jealousy. "But, madame . . ." *She awoke.* "Ah! monsieur, how you frightened me!" —"But, madame, it is but a moment since I heard you. . . .—In truth—I recognised the voice of M. de Richelieu!"

Monsieur de la Popelinière looked under the bed, after which he passed between the bed and the wall. "What an idea!" said Madame de la Popelinière, with a pretty rosy yawn, which exposed her teeth, white as those of a young wolf; "open the drawer of my toilet, it is there, doubtless, that the duke has hid himself."

The farmer of the revenue was furious. "Madame! madame! if you laugh in my face, I will exterminate you. A man has been here!"—"Ah! Monsieur de la Popelinière, if you only knew how sleepy I am!"

Monsieur de la Popelinière silently sought his rival under the harpsichord, behind the curtains, in the chimney, everywhere, even to the shelves of the bookcase. "It is like a miracle!" he murmured between his teeth. "To-morrow, I will bring Vaucanson to find the key. . ." As he said these words, his candle sparkled upon a sword laid at the foot of the bed. Christopher Columbus discovered America with less enthusiasm. "Madame, will you tell me why this sword is in bed with you?"

IV.

The Maréchal de Saxe wished to carry off Madame de la Popelinière from the Maréchal de Richelieu, if not from Monsieur de la Popelinière; he moreover believed, that the great frequenter of bedchambers was yet only skirmishing with this beautiful woman, whose adorable glances all Paris and all the court disputed. He came one morning to the house of the farmer of the revenue at his wife's hour for rising. He kissed gallantly the tips of Madame de la Popelinière's fingers, and asked permission to take her to the plain of Sablon, where he was going to review his celebrated Uhlans.

It was a fête for Paris and Versailles. Madame de la Popelinière understood that for this fête there would be a queen. She received with ill-disguised joy the proposition of the handsome Maurice. Born for the theatre, she had not lost her taste for ovations. She begged the maréchal to wait; she called all her women and was dressed as speedily as possible, without however compromising the freshness, harmony, and effect of her dress. "Madame," said the maréchal, who, according to the good custom of the time, had assisted at this fairy labor, "Love himself would have dressed you with less art and with less taste. It is true," said he, with the air of a conqueror, "that Love is not accustomed to dress women."

They got into the carriage, and arrived with much noise at the plain of Sablon, escorted by all the officers of the French army, illustrious for their coat armor, if not for their courage.

The Maréchal de Richelieu was absent on the service of the king. Madame de la Popelinière consoled herself in all the proud recreations of that review. She loved Richelieu, but as yet she was only at the period of happy love; that love, which smiles and intoxicates itself, which does not descend into itself to open the fountain of tears. She was to pay dearly for these smiles and this intoxication of the amorous dawn. But, in the meantime, she carelessly gave herself up to the gayeties of life in the triumph of her beauty.

Now, while she was at this review of the Uhlans, the celebrated Vaucanson, called to his hotel by a note from the farmer of the revenue, went, with the improvidence of genius, to throw down the first stone of her castles in the air.

When Monsieur de la Popelinière saw Vaucanson enter, he took him by the hand, and led him silently into the too-celebrated little parlor of Madame de la Popelinière.—"My friend," he said to him with an earnest manner, "a man gains admission here night and day; I have placed sentinels at the doors and the windows; tell me if it is possible to enter any other way?"—Vaucanson, without replying, looked about the room several times. He began by taking down a portrait of Dancourt, a half-length portrait, painted by Largillière, splendidly framed.—"No, no," said he, shaking his head; "there's no door there." He turned toward the chimney. "Why is there no wood or andirons on the hearth?"—"That's it," said Monsieur de la Popelinière, stamping his foot with joy; "they get in by the chimney!"—Vaucanson got down on his knees, and thrust his

head under the mantelpiece of sculptured marble.—"It is impossible; no one but a chimney-sweeper of ten years old could pass that way."—As he said these words, he knocked with his finger against the back of the chimney.

Marmontel then came in. As he has himself related this catastrophe (*Memoirs of a Father for the Instruction of his Children*), let us leave him to speak for himself: "Vaucanson perceived that the back was mounted on hinges, and so perfectly joined to the facing of the sides that the place of junction was almost imperceptible.—'Ah, sir,' he exclaimed, turning toward La Popelinière, 'what a fine piece of work I see there! what an excellent workman he was who made it! That back is moveable; it opens; but the hinge is so delicate! No, there is no snuff-box better made!'—'What, sir!' said La Popelinière, turning pale, 'you are sure that that back opens?'—'Certainly; I am sure of it; I see it perfectly,' said Vaucanson, overcome with admiration and delight, 'nothing is more wonderful!'—'And what do I care for your wonder? This is a pretty time to express your admiration!'—'Ah, sir, such workmen are very rare; I have not one who . . . . .' —'Enough of your workmen! Let some one be called to pry open the back of this chimney.'—'What a pity,' said Vaucanson, 'to ruin a masterpiece so perfect as that!'"

Half an hour after, the commissary of the quarter made an official declaration, by a *procès-verbal*, of the discovery of *this private staircase*. Monsieur de la Popelinière listened bravely to the reading of the *procès-verbal*.—"Monsieur the commissary, you have forgotten to make mention of my disgrace,

for Monsieur de Richelieu has been in the habit of coming through there for the last six months!"

The commissary made a declaration of the disgrace of the farmer of the revenue.—"And I," said Marmontel, wiping away a tear (he well owed that to his host), "and I will console you; I will render you the kind office which Horace assigned to the muses: *Vos lene consilium et datis, et dato gaudetis almæ.*"

V.

If we return to the review of the Uhlans, we again find Madame de la Popelinière indolently reclining in her carriage, absently listening to the gallantries of the Maréchal de Lowendal, the third marshal of France whom she dragged at her car (style of the time).

All at once she saw a certain person stop before her, a very ugly man, the very sight of whom had for a long time had the privilege of causing her great emotion: it was Guimond, an aide-de-camp of the Duke de Richelieu.—"Madame, madame!" he said to Madame de la Popelinière, with a mysterious air, "a great misfortune has happened: your husband has discovered, with the aid of that rascal Vaucanson, the secret of your interviews with my master!"

Madame de la Popelinière felt a violent blow on her heart. She kept upon her countenance all the charm of its smile and its repose.—"Monsieur le Maréchal," said she to Lowendal, "what a gallant man you would be if you would accompany me home immediately!"—"How, madame! would I not accompany you to the end of the world?"

When Madame de la Popelinière presented herself before her hotel, the porter cried out to her without opening the door, that he had formal orders not to permit Madame de la Popelinière to enter. It was in vain that the Maréchal de Lowendal cried out at the top of his voice, and threatened to hang him, the door was as immoveable as the Prussians at Rosbach.

Madame de Popelinière departed, but soon returned to the charge, this time with the Maréchal de Saxe; the porter, half-opening the door, declared that he was forbidden . . . . —"What! do not you know me?" said the maréchal; "learn that for me no doors are closed! Enter, madame!"

The porter's knees shook under him, and he recoiled three steps. Monsieur de la Popelinière appeared before the maréchal.—"What! my friend, my dear La Popelinière, a piece of scandal, scenes, a show for the public! Come, come, are not you a man of sense? War is war! Besides, do you believe in all this nonsense? Virtue falls into ambuscades, but it is still virtue. If you had married a wife without beauty and wit, you would not have had to submit to the talk of the rabble. Farewell, my friend! I will answer for your wife's heart!"—"Maréchal, do not laugh at me or my wife; Monsieur de Richelieu has been getting in by the chimney for the last six weeks."—"Maréchal for maréchal; I would rather it had been myself; but, after all, silence! there is nothing to boast of! I know many a man who would rather keep the knowledge of this all to himself than let the whole world know it. But I am expected at Versailles. I leave you, and recommend peace."

When the Maréchal de Saxe had departed, Madame de la Popelinière sunk upon a couch and hid her face in her hands; it was the vanquished before the victorious enemy. Sad victory! She hoped that the enemy would be generous; he was not so. "Madame," he said to her, as if he were speaking from the height of his honor and his fortune, "you are not at home here; depart with all speed. Take away, if you will, the portrait of your grandfather and his daughter. If you do not happen to die of shame, I will grant you enough to keep you alive."

Madame de la Popelinière, at these last words, rose indignantly; she cast a glance of contempt and sorrow upon that man, of whom it was said: "*Let him go and digest his gold.*"—"Farewell, then," she said, with the sad pleasure which is felt by those who abandon themselves for the first time to their evil destiny; "farewell, sir! do not insult me any more by thinking of me." She departed and returned no more.

When her pretty foot, with its delicate satin slipper, touched the pavement of the street, she became mournfully sensible to the realities of life. Whither should she go? she knew not; her mother was dead, her mother for whose memory she had no time to weep amid the wild joys of the world.

The poor woman who had a court in the morning, had not in the evening a bed to repose her aching head. The Maréchal de Richelieu had gone to Toulouse; even if he had been there, she would not have dared to ask him for the shelter of a roof, and above all for money. She had been willing to treat with him as one high power with another; but now that

she had just been hurled from her throne, she would not consent to humble herself before him.

As she stopped at the corner of the Palais-Royal, uncertain what road to take, wholly occupied with her misfortune and her love, she perceived that she was almost surrounded by curious persons who were murmuring her name, and relating to each other her adventure. The kitchen crew of the hotel indulged in noisy mirth over the story of the moveable chimney. It was a piece of news too scandalous not to be attractive to Paris. Madame de la Popelinière then comprehended the depth of the abyss.

She went straight forward. All at once she recollected a little apartment in the Rue Ventadour which she had kept since the death of her mother, for the pious purpose of preserving there the furniture of the celebrated Mimi Dancourt, not being willing that it should be sold at auction, and thinking it too antiquated to be carried to the Hôtel de la Popelinière. It was a plank of safety in her shipwreck ; she procured the key from the porter, rapidly ascended the staircase, and opened the door with a beating heart. She seemed to be entering the tomb; the apartment was gloomy and silent, the atmosphere was like the odor of the grave. Thus far, she had restrained her tears ; when she had shut the door her sobs resounded through every apartment.

It was not for her mother, it was for herself that she wept.

Strange freak of destiny ! It usually happens that an affair of gallantry, far from injuring the heroine, gives her more consequence and more éclat. Sometimes the affair of gallantry is a stepping-stone all

marble and gold : in this instance it was a tomb. All the laughers were against Madame de la Popelinière, all the journalists were cruel to her. The romance of her life was profaned without pity. This story of the moveable chimney was hawked about in Paris, in France, in Europe, in the New World. It was the subject of caricatures, it was set to rhyme in mournful measure to the air of the Wandering Jew, it was served up at the Théâtre de la Foire. Madame de la Popelinière dared no longer show herself; she was doomed to perpetual imprisonment. If, however, the Maréchal de Richelieu had been content to get in by the window instead of the chimney, there would not have been all this stir. Such is the danger of innovation!

VI.

For nearly six weeks, Madame de la Popelinière lived on the product of an India gown and a lace bonnet, which her waiting-woman had sold at the *Temple*. Monsieur de la Popelinière told everybody that he made his wife an allowance of twenty thousand livres ; but, in fact, he had as yet sent her nothing but her harpsichord, her books, her dresses, her jewelry, and her waiting-woman. For his own part, he was consoling himself with all his might. To celebrate his widowerhood the better, he had invited to his house the whole opera with Rameau at their head, who never quitted him again. Among his other companions, Fontenelle, Vanloo, La Tour, Gentil-Bernard, Montcrif, Marivaux, Crébillon, were always distinguished ; but the maréchals of France

no longer visited him. Marmontel continued to apply to him lines from Horace and read tragedies to him. The farmer of the revenue knew nothing of the Latin, and did not understand a word of the Alexandrines of his poet in ordinary. Vaucanson was a constant guest, and always asked at his arrival, rendered absent-minded as he was by his mechanics, if Madame de la Popelinière was in good health, and if it would be long before she would make her appearance.

When the Maréchal de Richelieu returned to Paris, he knew that the secret was discovered. He succeeded in finding out Madame de la Popelinière's retreat, and presented himself at her door; she opened the door for him and fell in a swoon at his feet. He scarcely recognised her, such were the inroads and ravages of sorrow. "Come, madame," he said to her when she opened her eyes, "why all this grief at the first blow?"

He had carried her to an arm-chair; he had kneeled before her, and was tenderly kissing her hands. "Ah! maréchal," she murmured with a voice full of tears, "all is over; all France is laughing at me; I see it but too well by the gazettes."— "How foolish you are to distress yourself about the talk of those rascals. Will you listen to a piece of good advice?" She shook her head with an attempt to smile. "Put on again your most beautiful dresses, make yourself handsome, even to impertinence; get into a carriage, go to the opera, and boldly throw aside the mask. When they see your beautiful eyes, the jokers will all exclaim: '*That stupid fool, La Popelinière!*' Look you, madame, when a woman is

beautiful, if she would have the world on her side, she must show herself."—"Never," said she, blushing at the mere thought of appearing in public. "Besides," thought she, hanging down her head, "where are my lacqueys? where is my carriage?"

The Maréchal de Richelieu was not accustomed to pray long to God or to women. When he saw that Madame de la Popelinière was fully determined to live in exile, he no longer tormented her. During his stay in Paris, he came to see her almost every day; but he soon perceived that his love for her was but a transitory blaze. That man could not accustom himself to tears. He had, besides, much to do. The history of the moveable chimney had not been as fatal to him as to Madame de la Popelinière; for him, it was one victory the more, a victory which must subject to him many a heart hitherto rebellious. He was everywhere received as a hero; he was almost suffocated with laurels, or rather with myrtles.

Previous to returning to Toulouse, he came and passed an entire evening with Madame de la Popelinière. He played the part of a lover sufficiently well to deceive this poor woman and make her believe that she was not yet alone. On leaving her he recommended her to seek amusement, saying that on his return he wished to find her beautiful and smiling.

To gratify him, Madame de la Popelinière visited timidly some friends of her mother, among others, Madame de Souvré, where she again met the painters and literary men, she had known at the Hôtel de la Popelinière. It was about this time, that she wrote this letter so tenderly passionate, this letter, found among such a number of the same character, in the

archives of the Richelieu family. We publish it without changing a word, with all its charming incorrectness, which gives evidence that it was the heart that spoke and not the mind :—

"JANUARY 22.

"MY LOVE: Your courier has not left as I suspected; what absurdity for an aide-de-camp who arrives on the 19th to leave on the 20th. But I must submit since I can not command. I am ashamed of the letter which I have written you yesterday. Excess of sentiment is in my opinion the beginning of infatuation and stupidity and unless one is in the same state and reads these things with the same love that has been felt in writing them they are more capable of chilling than of warming. Can it be, my love that my letters have that effect upon you everything passes rapidly through my head I admit it and have caused you to remark it a thousand times, but nothing remains but what can disquiet me. I was born timid, experience has made me distrustful I see everything to my disadvantage I fear that my voluminous letters have wearied you. You tell me that they constitute your happiness but this is so weak and so seldom repeated, you only reply to the points I care little about and which I have written you more to have an erasure to make than that I believe them. Such is that of Madame de Souvré and of my letters. My only pleasure is to write to you to think that you read me that I will be in your hands that you will necessarily be occupied with me for an hour excepting the abstractions but after all you read me and that alone would make me copy the gazette if I could not write you on other

subjects and the extreme confidence that I have in you causes me to write even absurdities to you which I am very sensible of for I send you all that passes in my head in the same disorder that nature has put it there and even more for I do not wish to forget anything and I crowd it all together. I have no connected ideas and it is for this reason my love, that my news and even my fears make no more impression on you than the fancies of my imagination but for my sentiments for you in whatever way I may express them add to them all that you can invent use all your efforts to describe them well and you will never find as much as I feel I love you my dear heart to madness there is nothing I would not undertake to prove it to you and merit the like from you but it is a balance it seems to me that is never poised and I believe that the more my side is weighted the more yours is lightened, anxiety belongs to love but that which I feel for you is more than love. I have heated my brain enough to make you despise me. I believe that my solitude and the total deprivation of all physical excitement has contributed much to it. There are moments when I wish and would consent to see you for an instant and press you in my arms and die. Reflection tells me that that will happen without its costing me so much. Besides my desires increase my impatience, and the obstacles that can oppose them present themselves to my mind with so much truth that I fall in the most agonizing dejection. But, my love, only think that I will have to pass yet a year without you that all which has already passed is of no account, that I have not even the certainty that a year will bring the end

of my troubles and all that can happen between this and then. And I wish for you so violently that were I to see you this evening, it would appear to me an age were you only on the other side of the lounge. My love you have made me very unhappy I can not see in the future a compensation sufficient for the ills I suffer there could be one, and that would be to enjoy you unrestrainedly according to my fancy for the rest of my days but that will never happen. It is impossible to think that a wand will not be sooner worn out than a bar of iron and you and I are still more frail. Ah my dear love you plan out to me the projects of the campaign for a year and how can you expect me to be satisfied. It will kill me for my life is with you."

To this so-tender letter the Maréchal de Richelieu did not reply. The letters of gallantry which he then received would frighten to-day all the *lions* of the Boulevard de Gand. He only replied *viva voce*, not even granting a remembrance to the poor forsaken ones whom he no longer met. More than two years passed before Madame de la Popelinière had any intelligence of him.

One morning he found himself in the vicinity of the Rue Ventadour.—"Ah, good heavens!" said he, "I have forgotten her!"—He ascended to the apartments of Madame de la Popelinière. This time it was a priest who came and opened the door for him.—"What is the meaning of this? Where is Madame de la Popelinière?"

The priest led him silently into the bedroom. She whom he left still blooming, whom he had almost

consoled, he found again, in the struggles of death! The waiting-maid wept, silent and motionless, at the foot of the bed. The physician, who had just left, had told her that her mistress had but a few hours to live.—"Ah, Monsieur le Maréchal," said the girl to him, sobbing, "it is you who have killed her! We have lived in absolute misery, selling our clothes to live from day to day; but, if you had answered her letters, she would not have been there. And had you but known how she has suffered!"—"What agony and what martyrdom!" said the priest, in a voice trembling with emotion. "Happily, since yesterday, she has been out of her mind. She is no longer conscious of her sufferings."

The Maréchal de Richelieu sadly took the hand of the dying woman, and remained silently leaning upon the bed.—"So much beauty!" he suddenly exclaimed, "so much freshness, so much brilliancy! . . . . Madame, madame! do you not hear me?"

At the sound of her lover's voice, Madame de la Popelinière raised herself and turned her head, as if seized with a vague recollection.—"Listen," she said, "it is a letter from my mother."—She took with a feeble hand a letter open upon the bed, and read aloud this passage, where Mimi Dancourt relates the death of her father:—

"He entered the chapel of the chateau, where two earthen lamps were burning day and night; what attracted the attention on entering was a stone tomb, placed under an ivory Christ. He went and laid himself on it an hour every night, as an expiation, he who had so often and easily laid himself in beds of much more difficult access! Once, stretched out,

the poor man murmured the canticles with ecstacy. I particularly remember these words: *Passions came about me from all parts; like bees they have overrun me: even as a fire among the thorns.* When he left the tomb, he shook his shoulders, as if he felt the icy hands of Death!"

Madame de la Popelinière broke off, and cried: "I am afraid!" She stretched out her arms. "Open my tomb! Monsieur de Richelieu waits for me! Listen! he has given the signal against the back of the chimney! Where am I? It is the Maréchal de Saxe, who is reviewing his Uhlans! Ah, Vanloo! what a pretty portrait! Now that I am dead, send it to Monsieur de Richelieu! And your pastel, La Tour; what is to be done with it?"—"Ah, madame!" said the maréchal, pressing the hand of the dying woman, "pardon me your death!"—"Who is it that speaks to me? I do not wish to hear anything. If he were there, I would not listen to him. It is ended. As my grandfather said: 'As we make our bed, so we must lie!'"

Madame de la Popelinière fell back upon her pillow, exhausted with a last struggle with death. She fell asleep, and did not wake again on this side the grave. In vain the maréchal spoke to her in his most affectionate tones; she never spoke again. She died in the night, leaving, said Collé, scarcely enough to bury her. She was humbly interred at Saint-Roche, where no one came to weep for her. She had not even an epitaph from Marmontel.

On learning her death, Monsieur de la Popelinière felt that he had loved her. He had constantly refused to see her, notwithstanding the efforts of Monsieur de

Machaut and Monsieur d'Argenson, for, in the end, every one had become touched by the abandonment of this beautiful woman. He discovered that he had been somewhat cruel; and, as he had some literary pretensions, he declaimed, in the lines of Malherbe, while digesting his gold, "*She was of this world . . .*"

On the death of Monsieur de Richelieu, the pastel of La Tour was found at his house.—"You have had amours with all women, but you have never loved," said the Abbé Soulavie to him, one day.

The Maréchal de Richelieu, took the hand of the Abbé Soulavie, and led him before the portrait of Madame de la Popelinière.—"Monsieur Abbé, her whom you see there I have loved; but I did not love her till after her death!"

MADEMOISELLE CLAIRON.

If there are lives more complicated, more romantic, and more improbable than imaginary romances, we must cite as prominent examples those of the actresses of the last century. Actresses, at that time, knew how to live; they were the grasshoppers who sing and dance all the summer over the flowery lawns and fragrant banks, without foreseeing that November will bring the cold wind. Now-a-days, actresses read La Fontaine's fables too much, and more than one among them, like the ant, thinks of nothing but winter in the golden days of spring. Like all moralists, La Fontaine is a false preacher—for the theatre. There it is not the ant but the grasshopper that is right.

I should need the art of Rembrandt to give the true expression to the thoughtless freedom of Mademoiselle Clairon, that queen of the theatre, who plucked all the flowers of life with a noble ardor, who was charming even in her follies, who proudly braved a world and a religion in which players were proscribed, who, after living a prodigal child, taking money with one hand to scatter it with the other, died a philosopher, poor, solitary, and forgotten.

A few years before her death, Mademoiselle Clairon wrote her memoirs — memoirs from beyond the tomb, since they were not to appear until after her death. A faithless friend published a German translation of them. The twenty-eighth Thermidor, in the year VI., Mademoiselle Clairon wrote to the editor of the *Publiciste:* "Since my book has appeared in a foreign country, the fear of being wanting in the gratitude I owe to the public, and the respect I owe my nation, determines me to print that essay myself. Signed, Citizen Clairon."

As we follow the celebrated actress in her memoirs, in the journals of the time, and in her correspondence, it is easy to trace her life step by step, as God, love, and chance, have made it. Let this be regarded, then, only as a patient study, where Imagination shall not once intrude to shake the golden dust from her radiant wings. Who knows, but in studying the history of a French actress there may be more philosophy to gather than in the history of a regent of France? Queen of the theatre — queen of France — I dare not say which is more of a queen of the two.

Mademoiselle Clairon (Claire Hippolyte Leyris de la Tude) was born in 1723, at Condé, in Hainault. We will let her give her own account of her first moments, which were indeed those of an actress. "It was the custom in the little city where I was born to assemble, at carnival-time, at the houses of the rich citizens, to pass the whole day in dancing and festivity. Far from disapproving of this pastime, the curate doubled the sport by taking part in it, and dressed himself in masquerade like all the

rest. One of these holydays my mother, only seven months gone in her pregnancy, brought me into the world, between two and three o'clock in the afternoon. I was so feeble that it was thought a few moments would end my career. My grandmother, a woman of truly respectable piety, wished to have me carried at once to church, so as to get at least my passport for heaven. Not a living soul was found at the church or the parsonage. A neighbor said that everybody was engaged in the carnival festivities at the house of a man of quality. Thither I was transported. The curate dressed as harlequin, and his vicar as the clown, thought, when they saw me, that they had not a moment to lose; everything that could be necessary was placed on the sideboard, the violin was hushed for a moment, the sacred words were pronounced, and I was carried home." We must confess this was a gay entrance into life.

It is curious to see Mademoiselle Clairon, after she became a philosopher, take a serious view of her life, and write reflections upon herself of deep feeling. In her old age, she is as sententiously grave as she was wild and fickle in her years of beauty—she listens to her heart, her memories, and the noise around her; without thinking, she makes a pen and sets to writing. She asks the secret of life, and endeavors to reply. After eleven reflections worthy of Socrates, she arrives at this as the twelfth. "To fulfil the duty which reason imposes upon me, to be in a condition to judge of myself, must I not ascend to first principles? What am I? What have I done? What might I have done? Providence placed me in the womb of a poor citizen's wife, a

weak woman, of free manners, and narrow mind; my misfortunes preceded my birth."

Old Hippolyte Clairon sets out from this point, with all the seriousness of Jean-Jacques, to give a summary account of her life. In her narrative, philosophy is the ruling principle; we easily see that she has too often been a guest at the suppers of the Encyclopedists. Her style of writing also recalls her style of acting; she always preserves the set tone of the stage. In those strange memoirs, which, far from giving a portrait of her, do little but disguise her, we find not one artless word, we hear not one cry from the heart.

And yet she loved. In youth she walked with delight under the willows of the field, hanging on the arm of her dear Du Rouvray. Why did she who loved the silence of the woods and the murmurs of the valley, thus forget the joys of affection and of nature? We can explain this contradiction. When she retired from the stage and the passions, she applied herself to natural history; from the first year of her studies she saw nothing beneath the blue sky but a vast herbarium. The valley, before so rich a frame to the picture of her love, was soon nothing to her but the perfumeless volume of the learned, who would give all the splendors of a sunset, for the discovery of a new lichen or a new insect. If Mademoiselle Clairon thus deprived nature of its poetry, later in life she did the same to love, in her desire to analyze it. Poets are sublime in their ignorance — to know is to lose.

We are already acquainted with Mademoiselle Clairon's birth. Her mother had not only the mis-

fortune to be poor, she was wicked and superstitious. A furious catholic, she beat her daughter to make her love God, and took pleasure in tormenting her with pictures of hell. Poor Hippolyte at the age of eleven, had never had leisure to play in the sun with children of her own age; she was a little Cinderella, pale, weak, and emaciated, whose only amusement consisted in reading two books, a catechism and prayer-book. But that God to whom she does not pray, for the very reason she prays too much, will take pity on the ignorance of this poor and pretty girl who asks to live and only learns to die.

Madame Clairon, to get rid of her daughter for some hours of the days devoted to visits, shut her up in a little room without any furniture, where nothing spoke to the eye. "What shall you do? sew," said the mother. But Hippolyte, who was born a queen as others are born servant-maids, would never keep a needle in her fingers. In this gloomy chamber she had time to dream, but imagination is necessary for dreaming; it is necessary, as a philosopher said, to have seen, read, and heard. Hippolyte, thus far, had heard ghost-stories, read her catechism, and seen her mother's gloomy abode. "What if I opened the window?" she said with a feeling of presentiment. This she could not accomplish, and in despair mounted upon a chair, and leaned her brow against a pane. As she was on the fourth floor, she could not see the passers-by, so she cast her eyes on the roofs, gables, and windows, in the neighborhood.

On a sudden, a large window opposite her own was opened; a magnificent scene caught her attention and dazzled her eyes. It was the dwelling of the

celebrated Mademoiselle Dangeville—she was taking a dancing lesson. All the charms that nature and youth could unite, were lavished upon her. "I was all eyes; I lost not one of her motions. She was surrounded by her family, and when the lesson was finished everybody applauded, and her mother embraced her. This contrast of her lot with my own, affected me with deep grief, and my tears permitted me to see no more. I descended from my chair, and when my heart, palpitating less violently, allowed me to get up again, all had vanished."

At first she thought it was a dream. She began to converse with herself, and was at once happy and sad in seeing that life is not always passed with a mother who beats her daughter, and a catechism that confines the heart. She still wished to weep, but soon, without wishing it, she set to work leaping like one distracted, thinking to imitate Mademoiselle Dangeville's pirouettes. She contrived to get a sight of herself in the window-panes, and although scarcely in her first lesson, she was astonished at her own charming and lively performances.

The little chamber in which she was imprisoned, was henceforth a paradise to her; she had herself shut up there every day, and when the key was turned in the lock, "I felt wings that impelled me to fly I knew not whither." She ran dancing to the window and was a delighted spectator of the budding graces of Mademoiselle Dangeville. She thought she was looking at herself.

One evening that there was company at her mother's, she leaned over to the ear of a man who was making her chatter like a magpie: "Tell me, sir, are

there any women who pass their lives in dancing?" —"Yes, actresses; why do you ask me such a question?" She told him in a mysterious way what she had seen for a few days past. "I see," said the visiter, "Mademoiselle Dangeville lives opposite." The man turned to Madame Clairon, "Madame, I will take Hippolyte to the play, this evening."—"To the play!" exclaimed the mother, "you might as well talk of taking her to hell."—"Do not be alarmed, madame, the evil is already committed, you have yourself taken your daughter to the play by shutting her up in the neighboring room, for she saw from the window—are you not aware of it?—she saw Mademoiselle Dangeville practising."

Hardly had the man spoken, when Hippolyte carried away by her recollections, bounded to the middle of the room, and went through all Mademoiselle's Dangeville's charming figures. One might have been mistaken for the other; never had a pretty portrait been copied with so much art and truth. Everybody was astonished; the mother herself, who never laughed with her daughter, could not keep a serious countenance. They succeeded in obtaining her permission on the spot, that her daughter should go to the play the next day.

It was at the Comédie-Française, that Mademoiselle Clairon, as she says herself, made her entrance into the world—to her, was not that the universe? We should fall short of expressing all her joy and all her wonder, she feared she should lose her senses. Three weeks later, this little girl who was not yet twelve, made her débût at the Théatre-Italien, under the patronage of Deshais. But the famous Thomassin, who

had some daughters to bring out, soon opposed the success of this embryo actress. Would it be believed? An organized cabal was necessary to exile her from *Les Italiens*, where everybody admired her beauty and her grace, at once studied and artless. She then went to seek her fortune elsewhere. "I was engaged in the Rouen troupe, under the direction of La Noue, to play all the parts suited to my age, to dance and sing. I was destined to be an actress, and all the world was alike to me."

After having related this first period of her life, the philosophical actress pauses and reflects. She writes at the head of a page *Recapitulation.* I should be wanting in my duty as an historian, did I not produce that curious page. "Hitherto, I had nothing with which to reproach myself; I knew nothing, I could do nothing; I blindly obeyed the destiny of which I have seen myself the victim and spoiled child, my whole life." Thus it is clear, that Mademoiselle Clairon could not escape the errors of her life. Destiny lead her headlong into every folly and extravagance; confident in her star, she fell asleep in voluptuous indolence on the alluring course of that stream, called human passion.

At Rouen, after her débût, Mademoiselle Clairon went much into society. The President de Bimorel's wife, whose praises were sung by Fontenelle, when the poet was ninety-five, was fond of the play. Hippolyte, who passed for a theatrical prodigy, was invited to this lady's suppers. There she found sighing lovers of every age; but devoted to a passion for her art, she would not understand their amorous language; she was satisfied with dying of love on the stage.

The day of love, however, arrived for her; but like all women, she loved at first without knowing it. There had been present, for some time, at the suppers of the president's lady, a young man who had studied in Paris, named Du Rouvray. He was noble, or nearly so; and for that matter, his face, his manners, and his mind, could dispense with an authentic blazon. "Clairon, what do you think of Du Rouvray?" asked the president's wife one day of the actress.—"I have not yet seen M. du Rouvray," she replied.—"He has sat opposite to you at supper ten times."—"That is no reason, madame."—"Ah! Clairon, I understand you; I shall take care how you sup together in future." Madame de Bimorel let Du Rouvray come as usual, determining to interfere in time.

A few days after this, Hippolyte was enthusiastically applauded in the *Folies Amoureuses;* two actresses brought her upon the stage at the end of the piece almost fainting. Intoxicated with her triumph, she staggered to the president's house. As she reached the door, she recognised Du Rouvray. "Ah! it 's you," she said, and threw herself into his arms. The young man, seeing her weep, supposed she was weeping from sorrow. "Heavens! what ails you?" —"Don't you see?" said she; "I am beside myself —I will tell you why. Come to-morrow to Madame de Bimorel's boat." Thereupon, Du Rouvray and Clairon entered the house: Du Rouvray surprised at the joyful tears and artless exhibition of feeling on the part of the actress; Clairon, surprised at herself, happy, but rather confused by her happiness.

Madame de Bimorel had a little boat upon the

Seine, at the end of a meadow adjoining her park; her company often went to take their lunch upon the grass of the meadow, or the neighboring islands. The day after Mademoiselle Clairon's great success, Du Rouvray walked up and down from sunrise on the bank where she was to meet him. After more than an hour he at last caught sight of her leaping like a green grasshopper over the dewy grass. He ran to meet her. "Why should I come, and why should I not come?" said she, blushing. They walked on in silence. "You understood," said she, with a voice of emotion, "why I wept in your arms, yesterday; I had been borne in triumph, and my heart was full of joy; I should have gone crazy, if I could not have thrown myself into your arms." Du Rouvray took Hippolyte's hand and raised it to his lips. In the course of their walk, they stopped before Madame de Bimorel's little boat; the actress entered it carelessly, Du Rouvray eagerly followed her and unfastened the rope. "Where are we going?" asked he, as he saw the shore retreating.—"I don't know," she replied, indifferently; "but as they say, 'happy is the man who walks without knowing his road.' "—"Must I row against the current?"—"No, God be our guide! Can you swim?" —"Not at all."—"So much the better; my star is fortunate. Would God have the cruelty to cast into the water poor children who can not swim?" The actress leaned over the stream. "Besides," she added, as she looked at Du Rouvray with a tender and melancholy expression, "the water is beautiful; it would be delightful to fall in together."—"There, you speak like a tragedian, who is used to dying

every night on the stage."—"I speak from my heart."

Fifty years later, Mademoiselle Clairon, giving an account of this voyage upon the Seine with Du Rouvray, wrote in a parenthesis: "I should have died at a happy moment; I had not yet acquired glory, but I had love! I have survived all that is good in the life of woman; I have kept my heart, but of what use is it with my face?"

In the meantime, the bark was still following the course of the stream; Du Rouvray only had to give an occasional stroke of the oar to keep it straight. While leaning over, probably to take a look at herself, Hippolyte perceived that her hair was becoming unfastened; Du Rouvray abandoned the oar and seized with a trembling hand those beautiful locks, so thick and glossy, the despair of every actress. While he was trying to fasten it up again, or rather to hinder its being fastened, the boat came to a stand among the reeds, before a little island covered with trees. Hippolyte darted to the land with the lightness of a bird. "Come, naughty rower," said she, turning back, "take my hand and jump upon the grass." Hardly had Du Rouvray jumped, when the boat became detached from the reeds, and was carried on by the current. "Heavens!" cried he, "I did not foresee that."—"Well," said the actress, casting down her head, "here we are on a desert island. Are we not acting a play?"

Du Rouvray and Mademoiselle Clairon followed with their eyes the retreating boat; a puff of wind soon cast it upon the bank, where it was retained by the tall grass. The two lovers (may we not call

them so?) made the tour of the island several times, with the curiosity of a navigator who has discovered an unknown world. After several walks through the briers and thorns, which Mademoiselle Clairon honored with the ambitious name of virgin forest, they seated themselves by the edge of the water in the shade of a half-uprooted willow. When they had taken possession of their rather savage empire, they confessed to each other with a smile that a desert island is only fit for heroes of romance who are never hungry; for their part they had not breakfasted. Du Rouvray consoled himself by kissing the hands and hair of the pretty companion of his voyage, while Mademoiselle Clairon, more romantic, abandoned herself to her golden dreams. She gathered the flowerets at her feet, and strewed the leaves upon the waves, as if she would have scattered her hopes. On a sudden she saw upon the bank an actor of the troupe, who had a passion for fishing. "Rhodilles! Rhodilles!" she cried to him, waving her hand. The ardent fisherman recognised the woman who was making the fortune of his theatre. "What an idea!" said he, laughing; "is that the way to the rehearsal?"—"The rehearsal? very true; I had forgotten it. Do you know that we are imprisoned on the island; for we have not the power of walking on the waters like the apostle. Do you see our bark reposing down there?"—"Do you wish to return to *terra-firma?*"—"Yes; we can't live like savages or anchorites." Rhodilles was a bold player of the good old time, always poor, always gay, and a great intriguer; he lacked neither good looks nor high spirits; for the most part, a wicked wag

and a bad actor, he sometimes had his days of good fortune. "So!" said he, going straight to the boat, "here's an adventure." In less than five minutes, he arrived at the island. "Pass, fair Clairon," he said, as he offered his hand to the actress. She did not wait to be entreated; and as soon as he saw her in the boat, he made a low bow to Du Rouvray. "Well," said Mademoiselle Clairon, turning to the young man, "are you not coming."

This was a cruel jest, for Rhodilles had cleared the shore by a vigorous shove of his foot. The actress could not help laughing at Du Rouvray's astonished look. Rhodilles carried off Mademoiselle Clairon, in spite of her prayers, while poor Du Rouvray was taking a lesson in philosophy. The actress has ended her narrative at this pathetic moment; perhaps she was unwilling to acknowledge this sad truth: Rhodilles became her lover before Du Rouvray!

At Rouen Mademoiselle Clairon had her poet and her libeller. They were both the same person, and his name was Gaillard. As she says herself, he had the art of making verses and of dining out. As the actress's salary amounted to a thousand crowns, Madame Clairon wished to assume the airs of the mistress of a house; so she gave a supper every Thursday, to which all the rich admirers of her daughter were admitted. Gaillard came to adorn the leg of mutton with madrigals, in which Venus and Vesta were mere ragged adventuresses by the side of Mademoiselle Hippolyte Clairon. Not contented with singing the praises of the pretty actress, he fell in love with her. After having sighed for six months, he

gained over an old duenna, who initiated him into the windings of the seraglio. One morning, while Mademoiselle Clairon was studying in bed, "clothed in her hair," he got as far as the door of her chamber, and told her he was going to throw himself upon his knees. The actress, indignant that any one should prostrate himself before her at such an hour, armed herself with a lovely passion, and drove away the madrigal-maker. Gaillard, indignant, in his turn, at meeting with such a reception from an actress already celebrated for her wild adventures, wrote that book, devoid of power, life, and style, entitled: *History of Mademoiselle Frétillon.* Gaillard was cruelly avenged, for this disgusting libel cast a gloom over Mademoiselle Clairon's happiest years. She too was avenged; Gaillard was obliged to quit the country, so loud was the public clamor raised against him. In this history of Frétillon, the writer has scarcely seized any incidents of the life of Hippolyte Clairon; the gallant adventures there described are almost all imaginary. There is little besides the episodes where Du Rouvray figures, that has the appearance of truth. Gaillard (we know not why, probably that the mask might be more transparent) gave Du Rouvray the name of the actor Rhodilles. Thus, in the libel, the two lovers only make one.

From Rouen, Mademoiselle Clairon went to Lille. La Noue soon abandoned his troop, to make his *début* at the Comédie-Française. Mademoiselle Clairon was engaged in another troop which was forming for the good pleasure of the king of England, established at Ghent, during the war in Flanders. She turned all the enemies' heads. We must say, in her praise,

that she refused a brilliant marriage with one of the commanders of the English army. As this personage had ten thousand men under his command, he wished to compel the actress to become one of the most splendid ladies of the county of Gloucester.—"My lord," said she, with theatrical dignity, "I am not my own mistress; I belong to my country; I am quite willing to be loved in a palace, but I wish, nevertheless, to be loved upon the stage."—My lord kept Mademoiselle Clairon under his eye, hoping soon to overcome her scruples, but Mademoiselle Clairon succeeded in escaping, she does not say how. It is reported, that she was indebted to a nocturnal abduction.

It would require the power of writing ten volumes without taking breath, to relate all the sentimental and gallant adventures of Mademoiselle Clairon. Up to her eighteenth year we may follow her, without getting out of breath. Until that period, she passes through her verdure and her bloom, like all other women. The earliest passions, profane and guilty as they are, have a certain vernal charm that enchants the student; there is all the perfume and all the dew of the dawn of morning in the vagaries of a heart of sixteen. But later in life, the green path has been trodden; one by one the fresh wild roses have been gathered; the bird departs elsewhere with his song, the pearl has been tarnished beneath the dust of the feet, the storm-wind has scattered the bright snow from the hawthorns; soon, we no longer count the passers in a path that is daily losing its songs, its flowers, and its verdure. After Du Rouvray and Rhodilles, whose gayety, thoughtless-

ness, and youth, made them objects of love, great lords appear upon the scene; a commander-in-chief, a ruined marquis, a farmer of the revenue, and a prince of the blood; but these are not young, and only redeem themselves by their wit and money —when they have it.

At Dunkirk, where she stopped, Mademoiselle Clairon, received through the commandant of the place an order to make her *débût* at the opera. There had been much talk of Frétillon, and the gentlemen of the chamber thought that one so pretty belonged of right to the Parisians. She appeared at the opera in the character of Venus, in the opera of *Hesione*. Although a bad musician, she was loudly applauded; people at the opera in those days had the sense to applaud beauty.

Mademoiselle Clairon did little more, however, than pay a visit to the opera; she soon made her *débût* at the Comédie-Française, in the part of Phædra. In the provinces she had played scarcely anything but *soubrettes*, and she was engaged at the Comédie-Française as a substitute for Mademoiselle Dangeville. Before signing the contract, she declared, to the great surprise of the actors, that she wished to play the high tragic parts; they consented, *on condition that she would dance and sing in the afterpieces!* They were all convinced that she would be hissed at her *débût*, and would be obliged to sing and dance all the time. She had, by accident, played four or five tragic parts in the provinces. Sarrazin after seeing her play Eriphyle, while he was stopping at Rouen, had predicted that she would one day be the support of the theatre. She wished to verify Sarrazin's predictions. Before

her *débût*, the actors were much amused at the pretensions of the haughty Hippolyte. She disdained to rehearse her part at the theatre, and on the day of her *débût* she came, proud as an ancient queen, to say that she only awaited the rising of the curtain. All the intelligence, the finery, and the curiosity of Paris was at the Comédie-Française, promising themselves a laugh at Frétillon, but no sooner had she appeared upon the stage, with her tender, fatal, furious passion, than the whole audience rose with enthusiasm; it was no longer the charming Frétillon, who played the *soubrettes*, or Mademoiselle Clairon, with her slight figure and irregular features. It was Phædra herself, in all her regal splendor, in all the majesty of passion.—"How grand she is!"—"How beautiful she is!" were the exclamations from all parts of the house. From that day, Mademoiselle Clairon was surnamed Melpomene.

This seems the proper place to introduce these few lines, taken from her reflections on the dramatic art: "In Phædra, in that part of the character that expresses remorse, I had prescribed to myself an unaffected style of elocution, a lofty and tender tone, abundant tears, and a countenance of deep sorrow; in all that expresses love, the intoxication and delirium a somnambulist might exhibit, preserving in the arms of sleep the memory of the fire that consumes her while awake. I took this idea from the following line:—

"Would I were seated in the forest's shade!"

The Comedie-Française was at that time so well-administered, and had such intelligent patrons, that the

principal actors of the troop could scarcely live on their pay.—"We were poor," writes Mademoiselle Clairon, "and had no expectation of receiving our due. The managers went every week to M. de Boulogne, at that time controller-general, to solicit the payment of our allowance from the king."—But in those days nobody paid—the king less than any one.

Thus, Mademoiselle Clairon, who made the reputation of the theatre, owed to her beauty alone, and not to her talents, the India gowns and diamonds that she wore. As she was fond of changing her dresses and her lovers, it often happened that she had neither lover nor dress. One day, the Maréchal de Richelieu called upon her to invite her to one of his *fêtes;* she refused. —"Why?"—"I have no dress."—"You have dresses of every country, every taste, and every fashion."—"Not a single dress; our small receipts have compelled me to sell everything valuable that I had; what remains is in pawn; I can not show myself except on the stage."

Like all persons of true talent, Mademoiselle Clairon had more than one enemy who denied her power over the public. Fréron declared that her sonorous organ deafened the ears without moving the heart. Grimm, who arrived in France in the height of this actress's triumph, spoke of the squeaking tones in her voice.—"Squeaks if you will," said Diderot; "but those squeaks have become the accents of passion."

It was about this time that Mademoiselle Clairon hired, for twelve thousand livres, Racine's small house in the Rue des Marais. "I was told that Racine had lived there forty years with all his family, that it was there he had composed his immortal

works, there that he died; that, afterward, the tender Lecouvreur had inhabited and adorned it, and had died there too. The walls alone of this house, said I myself, must be sufficient to make me feel the sublimity of the poet, and attain the talent of the actress. In this sanctuary I must live and die." All the poets of the time visited Mademoiselle Clairon in this sanctuary, which was somewhat profaned. The family dinner which Racine preferred to the dinner of royalty, was replaced by the licentious supper, wild songs resounded in those places hallowed by genius, where Racine let fall his Alexandrines as from a harp of gold.

In the meantime, Mademoiselle Clairon had become the heroine of the Comédie-Française. She had, if not eclipsed, at least cast somewhat into the shade, Mademoiselle Dumesnil, Mademoiselle Gaussin, and Mademoiselle Dangeville. She preserved her royalty until 1762. These were the palmy days of the Comédie; besides these four celebrated actresses, we may mention persons of talent, like Molé, Grandval, Bellecour, Lekain, Préville, and Brizard. Mademoiselle Clairon, by her grand and imposing manner, swayed this brilliant republic, which was a republic of kings. Others had more talent or more beauty, but Mademoiselle Clairon had the renown.

She reigned fifteen years.

In 1762, although she was verging upon her decline, they still spoke of her as a theatrical prodigy. I quote the following lines from Bachaumont, written the thirtieth of January: "Mademoiselle Clairon is still the heroine; she is never announced but there is a full house, and when she appears she is greeted

with thunders of applause. It is the most finished work of art; there is grandeur and nobility in her impetuosity — it is Melpomene from the hand of Phidias." The same gazetteer afterward passes in review the whole company of the Comédie, with exquisite delicacy. To get an idea of it, take the following note to the article on Mademoiselle Dumesnil: "This actress drinks like a coachman; whenever she plays, her lackey is always behind the scenes, bottle in hand, to keep her moist."

Instead of a coachman and a bottle of wine, Mademoiselle Clairon had behind the scenes a whole court of gay marquises, licentious abbés, and warbling poets. Marmontel, one evening, thought her sublime; they went to sup together at the tavern. Marmontel was at that time a young scholar, rhyming tragedies, which they condescended to play and applaud, out of respect for Voltaire, who had delivered him a certificate of genius. He was supping beside the illustrious tragedian thinking much more of writing a part for her than of talking to her of love. "What ails you? you are sad," said Clairon, suddenly. "I hope you are not insulting me by composing a tragedy during our supper." Marmontel had the wit to reply that he was sad because he was in love. "Child! is it thus you receive the blessings of Providence?"—"Yes, because I love you."—"Well, fall on your knees, I will raise you up, and we will love each other as much as it shall please God."

Marmontel complacently relates all the details of his follies with Mademoiselle Clairon in that artless book, entitled *Memoirs of a Father for the Instruction of his Children.*

Supposing, like all who are young, that he would love for ever, he went, like a poet as he was, and inhabited a garret in Mademoiselle Clairon's house. A sharp-sighted lover is always wrong in living under the same roof with his mistress. Hardly was Marmontel installed, when Mademoiselle Clairon permitted the addresses of another adorer, the Bailli de Fleury. "Cruel one!" said the poet, "you have wounded me to the heart."—"It is nothing," said Mademoiselle Clairon; "that gallant man has been sighing a long time; you shall be my lover in verse, and he shall be my lover in prose." Marmontel pretended to write prose as well as verse; he was by no means willing to share his conquest of a day.

The Marquis de Ximenès was also one of the adorers of the illustrious actress. They loved like Arcadian shepherds; a jest was the cause of their quarrel. It was said in the greenroom of the Comédie, that the Marquis de Ximenès boasted of turning Mademoiselle Clairon's head. "*The other way*," said she, coming in at the moment. The marquis would not pardon this insult; the next day he sent back Mademoiselle Clairon's portrait with these words at the bottom: "This pastel is like human beauty, it fades in the sun; forget not that the sun has long risen on you."

At this time Mademoiselle Clairon was not only celebrated in France; all the foreign theatres were sending her invitations by the voice of kings and queens. Garrick came to Paris on purpose to see her play in *Cinna*. He had a picture engraved representing Mademoiselle Clairon with all the attributes of tragedy, her arm resting on a pile of books

bearing the names of Corneille, Racine, Crébillon, and Voltaire; Melpomene was at one side in the act of crowning her. At the bottom of the picture were written these four lines by Garrick:—

> Fair Clairon, I said, will be nobly renowned,
> Nor have my high hopes been deceived;
> The Muse who long since by the actress was crowned,
> Restores her the gift she received.

These wretched lines made the tour of the world. Mademoiselle. Clairon's enthusiastic admirers were not content with this homage of sovereign to sovereign, they established the order of the medallion; they had medals struck representing this portrait, and they decorated themselves with them, with as much pride as if they had worn the *grand cordon.*

She had reached the highest point of her glory; she ruled the theatre and the world of gallantry; she dared to say of Madame de Pompadour: "She owes her royalty to chance, I owe mine to my genius." In vain did her countless enemies strive to oppose her triumph, which had now become almost ridiculous; she had only to appear to baffle all their cabals. In society, those who wished to laugh at her, could not help, as Diderot wrote, admiring her majestic eloquence. In her glory, she had the insolence of a conqueror. One day when she was playing at the Comédie-Française, in a performance acted before the people by order of the king, she came on between the pieces, and threw handfuls of money into the pit. The good people of Paris did not see through this quackery, and cried out with enthusiasm, "*Long live the king! Long live Mademoiselle Clairon!*" She

had braved Madame de Pompadour, and she dared to brave the king himself, thinking that the public would sooner revolt than lose her. She was perfectly at her ease while moving in the best society, and receiving at her table Mesdames Chabrillant, d'Aiguillon, de Villeroy, de la Vallière, and de Forcalquier; she was a frequent guest at Madame du Deffant's and Madame Geoffrin's, where they condescended to receive her for the sake of her wit. The celebrated Russian princess, Madame de Galitzin, was astonished at Mademoiselle Clairon's talent, and wished to leave her a royal memento of her admiration. "What do you want, Clairon?" she asked her one evening at supper. "My portrait painted by Vanloo." The painter was flattered by this reply, and wished the portrait to be worthy of Madame de Galitzin, Mademoiselle Clairon, and himself. He painted the actress as Medea holding a torch in one hand, and in the other a dagger, yet dyed in the blood of her children, insulting the grief and braving the anger of Jason. Louis XV. wished to see this portrait, and if we may rely on the authority of a journal, he went to Carle Vanloo's studio one morning expressly for that purpose. He complimented highly both the painter and the actress. "You are happy," said he to Carle Vanloo, "in having such a portrait to paint," and turning to Mademoiselle Clairon, "you are happy, mademoiselle, in having a painter whose palette is so rich to immortalize your features. I should be happy in having some part in the work myself. No one but me must put a frame to this picture, and I command that it be made as beautiful as possible. Moreover, I wish the portrait to be en-

graved." The frame cost five thousand livres, and the engraving ten thousand.

But after writing the history of Mademoiselle Clairon's greatness, we must write the history of her fall. She counted among her enemies, La Harpe and Fréron; La Harpe, because like a woman of sense and taste, she had never been willing to act in his tragedies; Fréron, because she preferred Voltaire to him. La Harpe took his revenge in conversation, Fréron in print. Mademoiselle Doligny was beginning to shine at the Comédie-Française; Fréron patronized her; he thought it a favorable moment to draw her portrait as a set-off to Mademoiselle Clairon's. The first, according to the journalist, was a model of grace and feeling; the latter, an abandoned woman without heart, soul, or mind. In Fréron's journal the illustrious tragedian was never named; she committed a great fault in taking notice of it. Seized with an unparalleled indignation and fury, she ran to the gentlemen of the chamber, and threatened them that she would retire from the theatre, if they did not render her justice against that horrible Fréron. All Paris was in commotion; the king convoked the council of his ministers, the order was signed to imprison Fréron. The exempts of the police came to seize him. How could he oppose force? Fréron improvised an attack of the gout, he cried out like one possessed, and declared that he could not stir without suffering a thousand deaths. This took place on the 14th of February, 1775; we read in the journal of the 16th: "Fréron's quarrel with Mademoiselle Clairon, otherwise called the literary factotum and Queen Cleopatra, makes a great noise at

court and in the city. The Abbé de Voisenon having written at the solicitation of the friends of the former, a very pathetic letter to the Duke de Duras, a gentleman of the chamber, he replied to the abbé that he had a great affection for him, and that it was the only thing he feared he should have to refuse him; that this favor could only be granted to Mademoiselle Clairon herself." Truly, those were fine times, when a journalist entitled to respect on more than one ground, was threatened with being sent to For-l'Evêque, or, what was a much greater humiliation, with owing his pardon to the actress he had offended. Fréron exclaimed like the Greek philosopher, "To the quarries rather!" This quarrel not only reached the tribunal of the king of France, it was carried to the feet of the queen. The queen, who loved to pardon, commanded that pardon should be granted to Fréron; but Mademoiselle Clairon would not abide by the queen's decision; she declared to the gentlemen of the chamber, that if Fréron was not punished, she should persist in retiring from the stage. All her friends took the field; she went to see the minister in person. The Duke de Choiseul gallantly advanced to meet her. "Justice!" she exclaimed in her theatrical voice. The Duke de Choiseul amused himself by bantering her a little. "Mademoiselle, we are both playing upon a large stage, but there is this difference between us, that you choose your own parts, and have only to appear to be applauded. I, on the contrary, am not at liberty to choose mine, and as soon as I show myself I am hissed. It is in vain that I do my best; I am criticised, condemned, hooted, and scoffed at; never-

theless I remain, and if you will take my advice you will do the same. Let us both sacrifice our resentments to our country, and do our best to serve it in our separate lines. Besides, the queen has granted pardon; you may, without compromising your dignity, imitate her majesty's clemency."

We read in the journal of the 21st of February: "The queen of the theatre held a meeting of her friends, presided over by the Duke de Duras, and it was agreed that the latter should threaten M. de Saint-Florentin with the desertion of the whole troupe, if the modern Melpomene did not receive satisfaction for the insolence of Fréron. This step astounded M. de Saint-Florentin, and that minister wrote to the queen that the affair is becoming of such great importance, that for a long time no such serious matter has been agitated at court, which is divided upon its merits; and that notwithstanding his profound respect for the queen's orders, he fears he shall be obliged to take those of the king upon the subject." As we see, it was the political question of the day. Fréron was saved from prison by the gout, which he had not; by the queen's clemency, but above all, because Mademoiselle Clairon went to For-l'Evêque herself.

Every one knows that ridiculous story of the king's players in ordinary, who refused to act at the very hour of performance, because the king had joined to them a comrade whom they thought unworthy of their theatre. Mademoiselle Clairon was again the leader of the revolt: but her star was paling in the theatrical heavens: her crown of roses was henceforth to display only its thorns. So the pit, exasperated at not having the performance that day, cried

out, with one voice, "*Clairon to the hospital!*"—It was all up with her! To the actor the pit is the pretorian guard. This important event took place on the 15th of April, 1775. I read in the journal of the 16th: "Astonishing excitement at Paris.—A large meeting of gentlemen held at M. de Sartine's, which resulted in sending the guilty to For-l'Evêque. Mademoiselle Clairon is receiving visits from court and the city."—The same day, however, she went to For-l'Evêque, "*before that rascal Fréron!*" as she said to the intendant of Paris. The next day Sophie Arnould gave an account of this imprisonment, almost in the following words: "Frétillon continued to receive visiters in coaches. On a sudden, a new visiter appeared, without causing himself to be announced to Queen Cleopatra; it was an exempt of the police, who commanded her, without ceremony, to follow him to For-l'Evêque, by order of the king.—'I submit to the king's orders,' she said, with her accustomed dignity, 'my property, my person, my life, are in his power; but my honor will remain intact, for the king himself has no power over that.'—'You are quite right, mademoiselle,' replied the alguazil; 'where there is nothing, the king loses his rights.'"—The joke, of course, is Sophie Arnould's.

At For-l'Evêque Mademoiselle Clairon found an apartment, and not a cell. Her friends, the Duchess de Villeroy, Madame de Sauvigny, and the Duchess de Duras, furnished this apartment with great magnificence. *Journal of the 20th of April:* "Mademoiselle Clairon converted into a triumph a disgrace that should have humiliated her. At For-

l'Evêque there is a splendid array of carriages, she gives divine suppers; in a word, she keeps the most luxurious state."—This manner of imprisoning actresses was not very cruel. They kept, as we may say, open house; they received their lovers, and supped from night to morning; and then, after a few days, a physician was found who seriously declared that their lives were in danger. Thus, after two days of festivity, Mademoiselle Clairon was authorized, thanks to the declarations of the physician of For-l'Evèque, to return to her home, where she was to consider herself a prisoner thirteen days longer.

She was entreated on behalf of the king and the gentlemen of the chamber, to reappear upon the stage. But she had still at heart those terrible words: "*Clairon to the Hospital!*"—"It is not the king," said she, "who can call me back to a theatre where he does not go; it is the public; I await the public's order."—But the public had had the time or the caprice to choose another queen for the theatre; they had even chosen two, Mademoiselle Dubois and Mademoiselle Raucourt, queens of a day, it is true, but yet queens enough to dethrone the old one. Mademoiselle Clairon, who feared oblivion as much as death, and who was unwilling to reappear before a public that had only adored her for twenty years, one day had her carriage harnessed, and drove off. Where was she going?—"I am ill; I am going to consult Tronchin."—So she said; but the truth was, she was going to see Voltaire—Voltaire, the true physician of a diseased reputation. She should have said: "I am going to Ferney; Voltaire will write verses upon me that will soon be read all over Europe;

thus I shall recover a little of my departing glory." —Alas, poor fallen queen! these are the beautiful verses with which she inspired the great poet: "*Nous sommes privés de Vanloo*," a couplet! and to the air: "*Annette à l'age de quinze ans!*"

She returned to Paris in the winter: she found winter everywhere; in her deserted house, among her forgetful friends and scattered adorers. Yet she again began her golden life; but the grain of sadness sown in her heart had sprung up. In vain did she sup in good company, listen to the vows of Monsieur Valbelles, and line her carriage with floss-silk, to rival the splendor of Mademoiselle Guimard; she suffered deeply, for she had lost at once her glory and her youth; she must thenceforth live over two graves!

She still acted, sometimes at Madame du Deffand's, sometimes at Mademoiselle Guimard's, sometimes at home. But the great lords, the poets, and artists, applauded her without making her heart beat; it was no longer the real public. One day, to make a little noise, she took a notion to play a comedy of a new sort; it was *The Apotheosis of Voltaire*. Every one knows how that comedy went off. There was a supper at Mademoiselle Clairon's, and during dessert, solemn music was heard; the guests listened with surprise. On a sudden, a curtain was drawn aside, and Clairon appeared, dressed as a priestess, crowning a bust of Voltaire. So far, it was only a good joke; but Mademoiselle Clairon passed the limits, by reading, in her tragic voice, some serious lines of Marmontel's, who wanted to have his part in the apotheosis.

It was about this time that Mademoiselle Clairon acquired a passion for natural history. She built an herbarium and studied with Buffon. She went into the open country, gathering herbs with delight, finding in kind nature a friend who always consoles, and recollecting that the moments of her life, the dearest to her heart, were those she had passed in a field with her dear Du Rouvray.

She was not yet quite deserted. Marmontel had returned to her, but she said gayly, "What would you have me do with Marmontel?" She had, besides, Monsieur de Valbelles, without counting a gentle youth whom she destined for the stage. It was the young Larive who became celebrated at the theatre, and who, at the end of his days, died of grief at no longer being *maire* of the village of Saint Prix, to which he had retired. Mademoiselle Clairon said of him, "He is a statue."—"Take care, O Pygmalion!" said Diderot, gayly. In fact, Larive ran off one day without saying where he was going. Thereupon, there were songs of the good Parisians who then sang so much; they compared Mademoiselle Clairon to Calypso. To complete the measure of her misfortunes, Monsieur de Valbelles came one evening, and with an absent air, asked her permission to marry a young lady of high rank; she gave a flat refusal; but she saw that Monsieur de Valbelles, who was still young, would not always ask her permission; she must lose the man after losing the heart. She writes in this third epoch of her life: "Monsieur de Valbelles was ungrateful—I lost all. At the same time the Abbé Terrai's operations deprived me of a third of my property. The fear of

running in debt [O Clairon! where art thou?] compelled me to renounce the luxury of expense. Then all my friends departed and never returned. At Paris, people must intrigue or keep a table, if they would not be left alone. The laceration of my heart and my frightful solitude inspired me with the idea of retiring to a convent." She sold her furniture, her pictures, her herbarium, and her diamonds. She was going to sell her portrait, painted by Vanloo; she was offered a thousand louis for it, but a lover intimated a desire to possess it, and as she was still magnificent, she refused the thousand louis, and gave away the portrait. The lover (it was the margrave of Anspach) hung up the portrait in a closet where he never went.

She soon followed her portrait to the court of the margrave of Anspach, who had offered her his heart and his palace. He was a petty sovereign, cut on the model of Louis XV., who left to his mistresses the care of the government of his states. *Journal of the 6th of February*, 1773: "Mademoiselle Clairon, not being able to live here on an income of fourteen thousand livres, is preparing to pass over into Germany, and to act for a time at the court of a margrave. In this interval she will economize her income so as to return here in a better condition to create a sensation of which she is so fond. Foreigners wish to have an opportunity of judging of the matured talents of this veteran of Cythera." Poor Clairon! this is the only farewell of those Parisians who had adored thee! As if they were yet to remember thee! Thou hadst not yet departed when they forgot thee! Truly, they had time to think of thee,

thou fallen queen! At the very moment of thy departure, they are following Mademoiselle Guimard's coach-and-eight through the mud; they are enraptured with the bright glances of Mademoiselle Raucourt; they are repeating the last saying of Mademoiselle Arnould. I turn over in vain the gazettes, almanacs, and correspondence, not one memory for thee! Thou art no longer present, so thou art no longer anything to them. Piron, who has just been buried, is not more dead than thou. Mademoiselle Raucourt, especially, caused Mademoiselle Clairon to be forgotten. The journal that so dryly bids adieu to the one, thus speaks of the other: "The new actress is creating a furor; she has played several times at court, where she pleases more and more, especially the king. Madame Dubarry is also highly delighted with her, and takes such a lively interest in her, *as to have exhorted her to be virtuous.*"

Mademoiselle Clairon did not act at the margrave's court; there she was actually minister. "The happiness and glory of the margrave were the only end of my labors and my ambition. I did all the good I was permitted to do; I knew neither revenge nor baseness." For seventeen years she governed with a strong hand and the ambition of a Pompadour. She thought for a long time she was counselling a Cæsar or a Titus, but one day the veil fell, and she exclaims: "Just Heaven! are you the man whose virtues I have so extolled, you who have been assassinating me by inches? I lay at your feet the wealth I received from you, you are no longer my sovereign, farewell for ever!" For my part, I

think the margrave had had a great deal of patience, to keep Mademoiselle Clairon as prime minister for nearly seventeen years, after taking her at the age of half a century. She returned to Paris to seek another sovereign; it was in 1790, and there was no longer any king. Crushed and dying, she wished to bury herself in a convent — there was no longer any God. She sought the money she had left at Paris, securely invested in good mortgages — there was neither money nor mortgage.

The illustrious actress who had kept a coach-and-four, who had seen all Paris at her feet, fell into the most profound and desolate misery. It is almost always thus they end; these charming gipsies whose splendor is confined to the morning of their lives. Fortune comes to them in the smiling train; when love departs Fortune mounts her wheel. Mademoiselle Guimard, who had refused the hand of a prince in the happy days when she had a private theatre and winter-garden in her hotel, was glad at last to marry a *professor of the Graces*, in other words, a dancing-master. Sophie Arnould, after having passed through all the splendors of an unexampled luxury, went, without complaining, to beg an asylum and bread from her barber. Mademoiselle Clairon, who had lived like a queen and a sultana, found herself at sixty-five compelled to mend her tattered gowns; she who had never condescended to hold a needle! the woman who had seen all the great lords of a generation at her feet, obliged to make her own bed, and sweep her own room! Insolent in her prosperity, she had spirit enough to be proud in her poverty. When a friend of her former days came to

see her, she still spoke of her high connections; instead of saying, "I am poor," she said, "I am a philosopher," and gave orders to imaginary domestics. When an aged friend talked to her, she had an hour of unreserve; she opened her heart and spoke in good faith. I have before me two letters, in which I recognise her by nothing but the boldness of the writing. These letters, written to an admirer of her better days, are sealed with the impression of a stone, on which her own name is intertwined with that of the Marquis de Tourves. She ends the second thus: "You ask me what are my misfortunes? all those that may be avowed without shame. Thirty years of destructive labors, the poison that has been instilled into my veins, the sorrow caused by envy and ingratitude, the most absolute misery, terror, dread of being abandoned, the ennui of solitude, have left me nothing whole but my heart. Probably, I have remained in your memory fresh, brilliant, surrounded by all my prestiges. Change, change your ideas! I hardly see; I hear with difficulty; I have no teeth; wrinkles furrow my face, a dried-up skin scarcely covers my feeble frame; by coming to see me, you will imitate the ancients, who descended to the infernal regions to communicate with the souls of the dead. You will find no Cerberuses or Eumenides with me. Sensibility will receive you; she is ever my faithful companion."

No address, no signature — it was under the reign of terror.

One morning that she was sweeping her only apartment, in a dress rather worse than faded, and a night-cap, a stranger presented himself. "Mademoiselle

Clairon?"—"She is not at home," said the actress.—"Tell her that M. du Rouvray will return this evening." Mademoiselle Clairon let fall her broom. "Du Rouvray!" she murmured as she saw the visiter descend, "if I dared to tell him—but since he will return." He did not return. Far from complaining, she thanked Heaven; she was unwilling that one who had adored her when she was sixteen, should see the fresh and seducing Clairon, metamorphosed into an old maid of seventy. "The memory of me is better than myself," she wrote to Mademoiselle Drouin.

Gradually, however, she recovered some of her friends and some of her property. A family of the middling class took her under their protection, she had some rays of sunshine before her death. She was wholly devoted to philosophy and wrote much, more than one of her pages is worthy of a place among the works that have succeeded Jean-Jacques.

Actresses who die pious, resemble boatmen who approach the shore with their backs toward it. Yes, the actress rows all her life among the rocks, she loves the storms and tempests; when near her arrival at port, seeing her bark leaking on every side, she turns and falls upon her knees on the shore. After having traversed every dangerous passage, all the faithlessness of love, she is glad to touch the solid ground, to repose her heart, a thousand times wounded, at the foot of that divine cross where the Magdalen wept. This time she will be no more betrayed, she may confide in all the impulses of her love. She has lost her beauty, but is not the heart ever young? To love God, they told her, there needs neither grace, nor beauty, nor smiles, all these were well enough for

men, God wishes none of such perishable riches. God is all soul, he unites with our souls alone. Mademoiselle Clairon had another way of thinking. She would not die religious, saying that she dared not offer to the Lord a heart profaned for half a century by every human passion. When the priest held up to her the example of the Magdalen, she replied that the Magdalen having repented in her youth, had been able to sacrifice at the foot of the cross, many days of gay and giddy passion. She persisted in dying a philosopher, loving God with the mind that reasons, and not with the heart that throbs.

She died the 11th Pluviôse, in the year XI., in the parish of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin.

Mademoiselle Clairon, upon the stage, was beautiful, majestic, haughty, dignified as a statue; but she scarcely ever had any feeling. It was seldom that an occasional pathetic tone softened the spectators; never was a tear of sorrow or joy seen to escape her. Her joy was calm and smiling, her grief bordered on rage; generally, she only struck certain chords in the heart of the public; disdain, indignation, pride, and heroism. She knew how to hate much better than to love; but, as she was a woman, she had her happy days of passion; but art and study were of more service to her than her heart. It was the tragedy of the heathen, the heathen who never wept, tragedy somewhat disfigured by French taste. May we not say that she was the ancient Melpomene, carved in marble by Coustou?

A PROMENADE IN THE PALAIS-ROYAL, IN 1775.

Rebuild at your pleasure the Palais-Royal of 1775; I am but a poor architect, I describe architectural ornaments in the style of Boileau; I am quite satisfied with the mode, in this respect, of our forefathers; they merely said, a palace, a castle, a cottage, and no more. The imagination or the memory of the reader will supply all else. Call to mind in the fairy-tales, the castle of *Beauty and the Beast*, there is not a word of description, we have nothing but *an old castle in the woods;* but, notwithstanding, how deeply is that castle engraved upon our memory! How completely does it efface every other castle, however laboriously described in the romances of the day! I will not then say a word about the stones of the Palais-Royal of 1775; I will not have much to say about the garden, but I will study its visiters. Whatever the descriptive writers may say in their enthusiasm, man is a more interesting object of study, than a sculptured stone or a green tree.

Toward the close of the gallant reign of Louis XV., Love, somewhat wearied with the frivolities of the boudoir, the painted screen, and other fashionable

follies, thought it was time to take the air. It became the fashion in Paris to establish here and there *promenades galantes*, for the men of leisure and the beauties of the day of all kinds. As Vauxhalls in London were frequented by all kinds, good and bad, so these promenades were called Vauxhalls: summer Vauxhalls, winter Vauxhalls; they had them of all seasons. Torré, the originator of this new-fashioned Elysium, did not, like the English, from whom he had first derived the idea, carry out the sombre design of decorating his Vauxhall with paintings of national victories (it must be confessed, that, at that time, France had no victories to commemorate). Notwithstanding, the Parisian Vauxhalls were none the more gay on that account. No music, no display, not even a song; love and wit had to do all. Thus the English, who did not understand much about such things as wit and love (I speak of the past), beholding a multitude of men and women walking about always on the same path, used to ask each other, When does the performance begin? Torré, finding in the long run, that wit and love grew tired of always playing the chief part at his Vauxhalls, conceived the idea of having pantomimes, festivals, concerts, and lotteries. "The Vauxhalls became," said Beaumarchais, "a kind of exchange, where gallantry was bought and sold."

The Ruggieris, the Italians, perfect masters in the art of amusement, built in their turn, a Vauxhall, which was all gilt, blue paint, and glass, a perfect fairy palace. There were dances, where the marchioness, a little tainted, perhaps, in her virtue, might meet the actress. About the same time, anoth-

er Vauxhall still, was established; this last one was proof to all the revolutions, people have danced there, to all kinds of music, to every variety of tune, in buckled shoes, in pumps, and patent-leathers; have danced there, every variety of figure, from the most *rococo* minuet to the most romantic cachucha. Do I not allude to the Grande-Chaumière? That Grande-Chaumière, about which there is nothing left to be said; the Grande-Chaumière, which may be called an operatic ball, saving the mask, was inaugurated by the whole court of Louis XVI. The Sardinian embassador gave his fête there, in honor of the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont with the Princess Clotilda. Queen Marie-Antoinette danced there (may her shade forgive me!) with the Sardinian embassador and the Prince of Piedmont.

Next year after, a wealthy builder, who had picked up some little knowledge of ancient history, expended his science and his fortune, in building a Coliseum upon the *Place Louis XV.* The dauphin condescended to lay the corner-stone, and soon after some splended fêtes were given there in celebration of his marriage. It might be said, without any forced figure of speech, that the great lords and the great ladies of the court had danced upon the scaffold. This Coliseum, which, from the laying of its corner-stone, assumed as proud an importance as the opera, or the Comédie-Française, or the Comédie-Italienne, announced some magnificent fêtes, without availing itself of the aid of the three above-mentioned theatres. Besides its dances and fêtes of every variety, there were to be, in order to remind us of its origin, hydraulic and pyrrhic exhibitions;

but, alas! the hydraulic exhibitions turned out to be some very innocent mockfights upon some scanty water, in a kind of unwholesome frog-pond, that the man-of-all-work filled every morning for half a franc; the pyrrhic exhibitions were nothing but a dozen Roman candles, which were called feux d'artifice. "Such an artifice!" remarked the Marquis de Bièvres. The only foreign exhibition given, was an absurd coronation of the emperor of China. The Coliseum, with its statues, its fresco paintings, its illuminations, its size, and its architectural style, was worthy of antiquity; but it was only a splendid desert, in which there is nothing for modern history to gather.

"Well," says a journal of the day, "all these monuments of French luxury were very far from equalling in delight that spectacle, which was formed quite naturally; we refer to the evening promenade of the Palais-Royal." This spectacle, in fact, was created by chance, without cost, without an architect, without decorations, without fireworks, without mockfights on the water. I was forgetting; there was a decorator, he was God; for this new kind of spectacle was displayed under the open sky, glistening with stars, beneath the trees, and upon the green turf. The garden was at that time the Duke d'Orleans' garden, a garden à la Pompadour, with green arbors, hedges, shaded bowers, a meadow, statues, and stone seats; but the Duke d'Orleans set but little store by this garden; all the world, except him, could promenade and pluck a bouquet there. One evening, a flute-player, from one of the windows of the palace, enchanted with delight the visiters in

the garden; soon a player on the violin, from a neighboring window, joined the flute in perfect harmony; then a hautboy joined the band, and soon there was a harpsichord; finally, in less than a month, there was a complete concert of quite a peculiar kind, which was the talk of all Paris. Its success was prodigious. Great lords and great ladies, literary men and actresses, all went to listen to the *enchanted flute.* They ended by having dances on the grass. There were no complaints of the want of light; they danced in all the freedom of a masked ball, the night answering the purpose of masks. The Duke de Chartres opened the garden to all men and women who had the inclination to go. It was in 1775, in the month of July, Monsieur de Malesherbes was on the eve of being appointed minister, the Duke de la Vrillère was about going off with his mistress. Notwithstanding the reforms of the king, all the frivolities of the old court were religiously kept up: hearts are not to be reformed like political abuses.

On the 17th July, you might have observed, among the earliest visiters of the garden, two distinguished-looking persons, the younger of whom was a mere looker-on from curiosity, at this inexpensive fête, where so much wit and love were expended. The young Telemachus, who was thus travelling in an unknown country, was Monsieur de Fontanes, since so celebrated; his Mentor was Dorat.

FONTANES. Why don't you write sonnets? Your thoughts, so full of grace and beauty, would appear to great advantage in such a golden frame. Do you recollect that beautiful sónnet of Metastasio's, on the death of the king? I remember the last three lines:—

Eppur morii di morte empia e spictata!
E Roma applaudì al doloroso evento!
O mercede inumana! O Roma ingrata!

DORAT. I do not understand a word of it. But truly this is a fine time to be talking about sonnets. Look! do n't you see? there goes Duthé, and Sophie Arnould, and Mademoiselle Guimard. Love is beating her rappel; we will have a fine time of it. If I am not mistaken, you are somewhat captivated by the eyes of Sophie Arnould?

FONTANES. By no means. Tell me, whence comes the success of that woman, with her long meager face, as pale as death, and her ugly mouth?

DORAT. Ah, there is where it is; that ugly mouth is a mouth that is very learned upon all subjects. All the cleverness of love passes through it. And besides, she plays her part so well that you see nothing but her eyes. *A pair of fine eyes have nothing to do but to speak. Delicta juventutis meæ ne memineris, Domine!*

SOPHIE ARNOULD (*slipping her arm into that of Dorat*). What a horrible language you are speaking, my dear guardsman. Is it Spanish or German?

DORAT. May it please you, it is Latin; but in your company we forget our Latin. You come very apropos. I am delivering a course of history of gallantry, for the benefit of this handsome youth, who is all heart. You know more about that subject than I do. One can not have been so often to the war (*La Guerre*) without having stood fire.

SOPHIE ARNOULD. Is that intended as an epigram upon me, or Mademoiselle La Guerre? Have you heard that she has just had a most unheard-of triumph

in *Cythère assiégée*. There were bouquets and applauses enough to turn her head. She sung, in spite of some good ears; but, as she is pretty, they listened to her eyes. Next day there was a new song in her honor:—

With *Du Thé* Durfort takes his ease,
Du Thé is his whim;
As for Soubise, easy to please,
La Brairie suits him.
But Bouillon, who for his king
Would make all the welkin ring,
Much prefers *La Guerre*.
Fol de rol!
Much prefers *La Guerre!*

At least, La Guerre is pretty; she is an ever-blooming rose. She is a terrible fool. Alas! is not the possession of beauty like having always ready, at one's service, the most clever remark? I can understand why she should be admired; but I can not understand the reputation of that great fool Du Thé. She is pretty, I grant, but her beauty is of that sheepish kind which expresses nothing. I am aware, that, although she was merely a wall-flower at the opera, that she had the honor of making her *débût* under the protection of the Duke de Chartres.

DORAT. All her reputation comes from a well-known pun. The count d'Artois having just espoused a lady of Savoy, condescended to bestow his good graces upon Du Thé. Monsieur de Bièvres, who was at hand, said, as he is always ready for a bon-mot, that his royal highness having suffered an indigestion from a *Savoy* biscuit, had taken *Du Thé* (some tea) at Paris. It is a very similar story to

that about the epitaph of a lover of Mademoiselle Miré. She had, among other lovers, a musician, who had the folly to die for her; there was inscribed upon his tomb: *La*, *mi*, *ré*, *la*, *mi*, *la*. A *bon-mot* about a woman is quite enough to make her celebrated for a season. You, perfidious Sophie, will be celebrated throughout all seasons.

SOPHIE ARNOULD. If I possessed the pretty face of Mademoiselle La Guerre, I should go to return you my thanks to-morrow morning before you are up.

DORAT. The following is in print: One evening, in the greenroom of the theatre, while Helvetius was looking at Mademoiselle Gaussin, without appearing to trouble himself much about her, an old roué, very ugly and very rich, approached the actress, with a gallant air, and, striking his heart and his pocket, impertinently said: "Beautiful Célimène, my heart and a hundred louis are at your service!"—"Sir," replied she, pointing to Helvetius, who was young and handsome, "I will give you two hundred, if you will come to see me to-morrow morning with such a face as his!"

FONTANES (*who is desirous of telling his story, too*). Is not that La Chanterie who is passing yonder? You have heard, I imagine, the story about the Englishman? Last winter, Lord O'They came to Paris, to pass the time. His first visit was to the opera, his last to the church of St. Eustache. At the opera, he was smitten with one of the girls of the chorus; her name was La Chanterie. She is such an innocent-looking beauty, that the painters take her for their model in all their sacred paintings.

Before leaving for London, the Englishman, who was somewhat devotional, went to kneel before a heavenly virgin at St. Eustache. It was a faithful likeness of La Chanterie.—"Oh, my God!" exclaimed he, all of a sudden, as he raised his eyes, and he fled without stopping.

Is not that the Marquis de Bièvres, who is coming this way?

DORAT (*bowing to the new-comer*). Yes, indeed, that is he.

MONSIEUR DE BIEVRES. Do you know, my dear Dorat, that you have played a pretty tune upon *la harpe* (La Harpe)? He has been confined to his bed for two days; what a misfortune! I have just left him, after a long visit.

DORAT. Let me hear something about Mademoiselle Raucourt, your beautiful Amarante.

MONSIEUR DE BIEVRES. I no longer call her my beautiful Amarante, but the ingrate to my rent (*ingrate à ma rente*). After having tramped about in the mud of Paris, she has made a *pas de deux*, and at this moment she is to be found at Spa. The pretty girl and beautiful woman! She went off without saying a word, but not without doing badly, with all the honors of war, in a carriage-and-six, belonging to the banker Achilles, who always has the air of Achilles at Syros. All the world exclaimed: "What a beautiful trick!"

Have you seen her portrait by Fragonard? it might be said that he has made a perfect daub of my love. She carried out a system of ruin, which was fully equal to Law's scheme; she got rid of, on an average, good and bad years, a hundred thousand crowns per

annum; but the pitcher that goes too often to the well. . ."

DORAT. If all those who have enjoyed her good graces should exclaim with you, the *ingrate to my rent* (*ingrate A ma rente*), she might live to a tolerable old age; that may be said, without doing you wrong.

MONSIEUR DE BIEVRES. Good-by, Dorat, I shall go spin my spider's web, I will go try and catch Mademoiselle Guimard. You have heard, no doubt, how she escaped a providential death the other night; the canopy, the *heaven* (*ciel*) of her bed fell the other night with a great racket. Just Heaven (*juste ciel*)! exclaimed the religious folks. Are you going to-night to see Savigny's *Persifleur?* I fancy that all his friends will be there.

BEAUMARCHAIS (*giving his hand to Dorat*). Well, my dear guardsman, what is there new with you?

DORAT. Nothing; but how is it with you? By-the-by, there is some talk of a letter which is attributed to you. This is the story. You fell desperately in love with the pretty Baroness du Marsault; your love was not thrown away; the baroness made no secret of the affair; the baron, at the coming out of the opera, promised that he would make you submit to the same chastisement as Monsieur de Cazes; but you, in the meantime, gave him on account a couple of blows with your cane, which made noise enough to be heard; and to settle the account in full, you wrote to him the following epistle, which is a masterpiece of impertinence:—

"It appears, my lord, that all you want more, is to be satisfied."

BEAUMARCHAIS. No more of that, I beg. Is there any news from Voltaire? Is it true that Fréron is dying? I am told, too, that Rousseau has not much longer to live. It is a pity that this great man had not died without *confessions*, as the Marquis de Bièvres would say. I am expecting the Duke de Chartres. Have you heard of his last adventure? But here comes Marmontel. Farewell!

(Beaumarchais goes off yawning.)

FONTANES. Now, there is a man of genius! what a pity he has not written poetry!

DORAT. But he has composed some tolerable songs. But what is your opinion, Belisarius (*maliciously*)? We are talking of the genius of Beaumarchais.

MARMONTEL (*bowing*). His genius is of a bad quality; his humor makes one gnash his teeth. With a little good resolution, any one might without much trouble. . . But here is a song of mine. . .

DORAT (*all in a fright lest he may be obliged to listen to the song*). I only acknowledge Collé's claim to write songs. Collé, well and good, his is the true satirical muse. There are Favart and Sedaine, perhaps, but they are all.

MARMONTEL. I see you were not at my last comic opera. Again, that confounded Grétry was by no means very happy in his music. All things considered, I prefer the easy humor of Panard; I remember the time when, not having much to do, when I was editor of *Le Mercure*, I had often recourse to the lively muse of poor Panard. I mounted to his garret; I found him in bed, reading La Fontaine or Rabelais; he himself was the Rabelais of story, and the La Fontaine of song. "Have you some couplet

or other for the *Mercure ?*—look into your wig-box." This box was the refuge of all the scraps on which the poet scribbled his verses. "What!" said I, to him, "you have again spilled the wine upon your manuscripts."—"Take those, they bear the stamp of genius." The poor poet had such a tender and deep affection for the bottle, that he spoke of it as of a friend; and with the glass in his hand, and as he contemplated the god of his worship and his delight, he would become affected to tears. When Gallet died, I met Panard all in tears, who said to me, by way of a funeral oration: "I have been to groan and weep upon his tomb. And such a tomb! Oh, Monsieur! they have placed him under a gutter, he who, since he had reached the age of reason, had not drank a drop of water!" And he wept more than ever. Panard, Gallet, and that set, spent their lives at the tavern playing the buffoon, singing about the vine and Jeanneton, slandering God and the devil, and doing it all with the recklessness of children rather than philosophers. One evening, I stopped to look at a drunken man that was passing on a litter, accompanied by four drunken fellows who were singing the *Miserere*. "What! is that you, Monsieur Panard?"—"Yes," said he, sadly; "it is necessary that an honest fellow should know once for good, what kind of wine he has; my wine is not of a very cheering kind, you will observe."

DORAT. Another day, it was Good Friday, Piron, Panard, Collé (in spite of his pretensions), had kept their fast at the tavern; they started out to go to *tenebrae;* they went, zig-zagging, through innumerable streets. "My friends," said Panard, as he cast him-

self, quite overcome, into the arms of Piron, "this is a dreadful day, all nature is afflicted, the earth trembles under our feet, there is something wrong in the streets." They re-entered the tavern and did not leave it till Easter day.

MARMONTEL. I have just made, as I came along, an epitaph for D'Alembert.

This sage in friendship . . . .

DORAT (*out of patience*). Good Lord, a man's genius must be of a melancholy kind, if he can compose epitaphs in this place. Go, make your epitaph at the Academy, if you please, but at the Palais-Royal, where there are so many better things to do, it is quite a sacrilege.

MARMONTEL. Oh, Dorat! how I pity you, with your worldly frivolities. They will end in nothing.

DORAT. That is my business; I do not wish to end in anything. That is the reason, my muse mounts a young horse, which will break its neck, doubtless. The more serious kind of geniuses who attempt to attain to so much, beware, Belisarius! they straddle a sensible jackass, that jogs on without stumbling.

RULHIERES (*coming up unexpectedly*). Well, gilded poet, how goes it with the five mistresses?

MARMONTEL (*vexed*). I leave you on your high horse. I am off on my jackass, to visit Monsieur de Malesherbes, who has asked my advice about his discourse to the Academy. Good evening.

RULHIERES. Have you heard that story *apropos* to the tragedy of Rotrou? The poor historian had retouched, fifteen years ago or so, the *Venceslas* of Rotrou. Lekain, being with good reason, dissatisfied

with the alterations, got Colardeau to arrange the piece according to his notion. All this was done with the utmost secresy; thus, at the rehearsals, Lekain read the piece as it was prepared by Marmontel; but at the representation, Colardeau's piece had its turn. Lekain played it with great success. I leave you to judge of the surprise and indignation of Marmontel, especially when going to complain of this treachery, he was received with the praises of Lekain, Colardeau, and all the company.

CHANFORT (*arriving*). Always talking scandal, Rulhières.

RULHIERES. I always pass for a bad character; however, I was never guilty but of one piece of mischief.

CHANFORT. When will it end?

DORAT (*to Rulhieres*). You must have enjoyed that one exceedingly.

RULHIERES (*with an absent air*). I believe you (*a silence*). Who is that great cherubim yonder, who is inclining his head so thoughtfully? Is it not Bernardin de Saint-Pierre?

DORAT. The philosopher of the other world?

CHANFORT. Yes, a vagabond philosopher, somewhat in the style of Jean-Jacques Rousseau; to-day, Bernardin is taking a walk in the Palais-Royal; next year, you may meet him at Congo; his youth is of the most romantic and capricious kind. He is everlastingly hob-nobbing with both misery and wealth; he lives now with great lords, now with poor devils. At the present he is thinking, perhaps, that his coat is somewhat threadbare.

RULHIERES. You have never heard, perhaps, the story about the shoes with the silver buckles. It is

quite a new story which is well worth telling. Bernardin, had arrived as usual from somewhere I do not know where. On his return, he had learned that a cousin of his, who loved him as a son, had fallen ill. "I will go to see him, to-morrow," said he, much affected. But next day, as the sun was out in all its glory, Bernardin went to take a walk toward Passy and Auteuil, to botanize. "I can not afford to lose so fine a day," he said. In the evening he received word that his cousin was growing worse. "I will go to-morrow," said he, still more affected than he was on the previous evening; but next day it rained in torrents. "My cousin can wait a little; I have neither carriage nor umbrella; my shoes let in the water, I can not go so far." And he set himself quietly to work, studying the plants he had collected the evening before. Absorbed in this study he forgot to look out of his window; the sky had cleared and the sun was out; he saw nothing but his books and his plants till night. In the evening, when he was in bed, the sad messenger came again, to inform him that his cousin was on his death-bed. "To-morrow, I will go and pass all the morning with him."—"Take care, not to be too late. Death will not wait long." Next morning, Bernardin arises, thinking of his cousin; he opens his window; before looking up to the sky, he regards with deep interest a little rose-bush that had flowered during the night, thanks to the rain and the sun. He admires the leaves and the flower of his darling rose-bush, he breathes with delight the delicate perfume which the breeze bears to his nose; while he is contemplating this masterpiece of nature, he discovers countless insects, that

are feeding upon the honey of the flower, and intoxicating themselves in the dew, in which a ray of the sun is bathed; it is a whole world that is dwelling in this grain of sand; he looks for his lens, he studies this new world with so much ardor, that he forgets his cousin again. At noon, the mournful messenger arrives, paler and more sad than ever: "Oh, my God! my poor cousin!" exclaimed the philosopher. "He is dead!" Bernardin strikes his forehead in despair, he weeps like a child, he curses his neglect, in a word he is a prey to the most profound grief. He finishes dressing himself, he descends in silence, he runs to the house of the deceased. He finds an old aunt, who sobbingly rebukes him for his neglect. "I am very much to blame," says Bernardin, "for pity's sake let me still embrace him." He goes, quite overwhelmed, into the chamber of the dead. The nurse had just gone out in search of a shroud. Bernardin casts his eyes upon the bed, but his glance falls to the ground, upon a pair of shoes with silver buckles. The shoes, which are quite new, surprise him and absorb all his thoughts. "The devil, for whom are these shoes?" says he, "they are beautiful shoes indeed. Did my cousin want to go off with them? That truly was an odd notion for a dead man. At any rate, I have farther to go than he has. My poor cousin!" He bends over the bed without losing sight, however, of the shoes. "How strange! human nature is an odd thing! Our feet are of the same size; let us try." He takes off one of his shoes and puts on one of the pair with the silver buckles. "That fits to perfection." At that moment, a strange hallucination seizes him; the cur-

tains move, the dead man breathes. Bernardin makes a step back, with the foot with the new shoe. "If he should demand his shoes?" The thought frightens him, a philosopher soon loses his balance; our philosopher did not know what to do; the dead man and those confounded shoes were playing the devil with him. He thinks of making his escape, he takes up his old shoe but the new one keeps its place; his feet are on fire. If he should be caught with one new shoe and one old one. There is no time to lose. "Alas!" said he, "my poor cousin can make the rest of his journey with the old pair, the road to heaven is not stony." While thus reasoning with himself, he puts on the other shoe: "How well they fit; but these silver buckles are somewhat on my conscience . . . . My poor cousin! . . . . Alas! he is as dead as a door-nail; there is already in the room a smell of the grave." And thereupon the philosopher, hearing some one, hurries away. "A good journey to you," said he; "How singular it is I should have found those shoes."

DORAT. It is humiliating to confess it, but such is the weakness of human nature, which causes us to falter at every step in spite of us.

CHAMFORT. Especially with a pair of dead man's shoes. It reminds me of an exclamation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on hearing of the death of Claude Anet: "Ah! is he dead? then I will put on his coat."

DORAT (*stopping suddenly*). Do you hear the *enchanted flute?* Is it not like being transported to some solitary valley? Picture to yourself one of Boucher's sweet pictures: a shepherdess, with bare feet,

her hair floating in the wind, sleeping under a bushy hedge, within a step of a spring; beautiful white sheep are pasturing upon the meadow; a dog, decked with ribands, is guarding, at the same time, the flock and the imprudent shepherdess; the sky is of a heavenly calmness, although, here and there, are some scattered clouds; a silence reigns like that of night; the breath of the wind is hardly audible; with a little attention, the beating of the shepherdess's heart might be heard. But, behold, the picture becomes animated: a shepherd approaches from a neighboring bower, bearing in his hand a beautiful basket of spring flowers, roses, pinks, primroses, lilies, and all. There is, besides, another flower, of a new variety, half hid among the others; this flower, which somewhat spoils the bouquet, is a billet-doux. The shepherd approaches stealthily, he smiles upon the watchful dog, he hangs his basket of flowers upon the tufted hedge, by the arm of the sleeping beauty, who is not asleep, but pretends to be. She listens with her eyes closed; she hears the wind which rustles through the hedge, the murmur of the spring, what besides? You might guess; she hears the cooings of the dove, and the sighs of the shepherd; she breathes the sweet perfume of the verdure, but especially the perfume of the basket. Oh, poor innocent! beware of the wine of love! The shepherd approaches a step, his lips two; then the dog begins to bark, in spite of the coaxing of the traitor; but he barks too late; the kiss is taken!

—Well, this flute-player, who comes I know not from where, but who will reach a brilliant reputation before long, understands pastoral poetry, like Boucher. This picture of *The Stolen Kiss*, that the whole

world has seen, the flutist imitates wonderfully, or rather recreates it; at first, there is the silence of the landscape, the somewhat-restless sleep of the shepherdess, who in her dreams anticipates the coming storm. Thanks to the flute, we hear the beating of her heart; then the stealthy steps of the shepherd; at that moment the flute is but lightly touched; soon the breeze passes through the hedge, mingled with amorous sounds; the dove coos, the spring murmurs, the linnet pipes, the blackbird whistles, and the shepherd sighs; do you not hear the sound of a kiss, which is lost in the barking of the dog?

(Mademoiselle Guimard and Sophie Arnould stop before the promenaders.)

SOPHIE ARNOULD. What wretched farce are you playing here?

CHAMFORT. We were waiting for you.

MADEMOISELLE GUIMARD. Will there be a general kissing all round, at the *dénouement?* Will there be a marriage? Who will have me?

RULHIERES. Every one, but no one particularly. Are you no longer in the church, Guimard? What has become of the Bishop of Orleans, and all his benefices?

SOPHIE ARNOULD. She is always giving some sad blows to the church, with the crosier of my lord the bishop. Farewell, I am in a hurry to join poor Germancé, who is doing penance. She has been weeping now full six weeks. We will all end like so many penitent Magdalens. You know the rowers always turn their back to the shore they wish to reach.—What is that I hear?

The Count d'Artois and the Duke de Chartres

have just arrived ; our promenaders disperse in spite of themselves ; it is the hour when the dances begin; the night was dark, not a star in the heavens, not a light in the garden ; I will leave it to you to imagine how they recklessly abandoned themselves to all kinds of mad revelry. The great lords and the actresses were at the close of that long carnival of royalty and nobility, which had commenced with the regency ; old French folly was shaking its noisy bells ; the intoxication of pleasure, which as yet had only sated royalty, had extended even to the people. Disregard of this world and the next ruled absolute then ; people lived from day to day, without any thought of the morrow ; the souls and lives of all were the sport of the wind. How much genius lost, but especially how much time wasted ! How many hearts, fired above by Divine love, were extinguished here below by the breath of Sophie Arnould or Mademoiselle Guimard ! How many noble poets, who came from the provinces divinely inspired to cultivate poetry, and who withered under the *persiflage* of Grimm or La Harpe ! How many innocent young *abbés*, with their hearts open before God, and their souls aspiring to heaven, who forgot their prayers in the company of the Abbé de Grécourt or the Abbé de Voisenon !

On the 17th July, 1775, while so many fine wits, so many great lords, so many celebrated women represented France in the garden of the Palais-Royal, a stranger, by genius a naturalized Frenchman, was walking all alone in sadness, among all those gay and careless visiters. He was dressed so simply, his features had such an expression of simplicity,

that he attracted no notice. He stopped before the dance on the green, murmuring, "Yes, dance away, dance away, grasshoppers that you are!" He who spoke thus, burst into a loud forced laugh, the laugh of a madman. He turned round upon hearing a deep sigh. "Oh! Monsieur de Grimm, I shall die of hunger. I have no genius!" He beheld a young man, who was present, weeping at this spectacle of the follies of France. "Why do you weep?"—"I have my own griefs; I keep them to myself."

The old man, you conjecture, was Jean-Jacques Rousseau; the young man, Gilbert.

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